

THE TRAGEDY OF A QUIET LIFE.

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CHAPTER III.

A GRAVE face old Marjory's, at the best of times—always a grave face; but the time came when its gravity was deeper than ever, and when even its many lines and furrows were deeper too. Women are quicker than men in the instinct of seeing danger ahead, particularly when the danger is danger to one of themselves; and, in the case of her young nursing, Marjory had been quicker to see the dangerous truth than her master had, dear as this one ewe lamb was to him in his lonely, laboring life. As the weeks followed one another, and the winter grew older, Prue's fate had been weaving itself out. The unceremonious evening visits, the chance meetings, the graceful idle speeches, could not be without a result, and their result was just the natural one. What had been easy at first, became easier as time passed on; for she had learned to love this man, through her very belief in him. The hours were scarcely long enough to dream her innocent day-dreams in, the undefined yet intense happiness filled her from morning till night; the old, quiet life returned to her mind as something lost for ever, something over which a great change had come, something to which she could never go back. With Strathspay it had been nothing more than drifting on, day by day. It had been a pleasanter winter than he had expected, or his rector's daughter had made it so. Circumstances had thrown him in her way, and circumstances had given her a charm for him, and he was a man whom circumstance governed completely; so it was that the spirit of the hour ruled him, and no day passed without some new move being made in the old, graceful, indolent, careless game.

But, whoever else was blind, Marjory was not. She had seen this old, graceful game played before, and its ending had been one which filled her honest old Puritan heart with horror—not that she ever dreamed of such an ending to her nursing's story; but "The bairn is but a bairn after a," she said to herself sadly, "and I canna stan' by and see her wrangled."

It would have been a hard matter to speak to the "bairn" herself; nay, how could she? The sweet, serious face was so tenderly bright,

in these days; the brown eyes were so full of a new belief and happiness. It seemed as though a new life had come to her. How could she cloud it with such a warning?

"I canna do it," the faithful old creature said to herself, after many sad hours of pondering. "I canna do it mysel', so I maun e'en speak to the rector."

So it was, that, watching her opportunity, she came into her master's study one evening, when he was alone, and broached the subject to him, with much faltering and grief.

"She's no a bairn any langer, master," she ended, smiling sorrowfully. "Canna ye see that this braw young laird has stepped in between us?"

A strong, sudden pang came upon her master, as he listened. He had never dreamed of this before, and here he had awakened from his fancied security, to find that his child was his no longer. Child! Nay, this faithful, ignorant woman, who had been quicker sighted than he, for all his lore, had been right in saying that their bairn had become a woman.

"She is only seventeen," he said, with a new recurrence of the sudden pain. "And yet—How blind I have been. Poor bairn! Poor little Prue!"

When Marjory went back to her kitchen, she heard her master's feet, in his room above, pacing slowly and heavily to and fro. She heard them for two long hours, never resting for a moment, only treading backward and forward, in dull monotony. When his pretty young wife lay dead in her chamber, Marjory remembered that she had heard his slow feet through the whole of the dreary winter's day, and remembered, too, how she had hushed the little brown-eyed baby closer to her breast, weeping silent, heavy tears over the sad echo.

Perhaps, as he pondered over the grave truth to which he had newly awakened, a sorrowful memory of his child's dead young mother stirred up his heart, and his old sorrow for the lonely life his little helpmeet had led, grew stronger as he thought of the difference a mother's care would have made.

When Prue returned, after her absence, it was almost dark, and, going upstairs, she opened the study-door, to find her father sit-

ting in his chair, by the dull embers, resting his head upon his hand. Something in his face struck her sadly, and, with a little pang of affectionate self-reproach, she went and knelt beside him upon the hearth. But it was not so easy to talk now as it used to be, and, besides, she felt half sad herself this evening. She scarcely knew why, sometimes such sadness came upon her—half tenderness, half pain; but the time had not come yet when she could ask herself its meaning.

"I have been to the church, Papa," she began to tell him. "It is getting along beautifully. It will be completed by Christmas, Lord Strathspey says."

"Was Lord Strathspey with you this evening, Prue?" he asked, gently.

She did not look up at him, and the red blood mounted to her cheeks, as she answered softly, playing with her gloves,

"Yes, papa." For his quiet voice held just the thoughtful sadness of his face.

He laid his hand upon her pretty brown hair with a gentle touch—a touch as gentle as her dead mother's could have been, and, at last, as if unconsciously, he drew her head to its old childish resting-place upon his knee.

"He has been with you very often of late, has he not?" he questioned. "Prue," with the same thoughtful sadness in his tone, "is this grand young laird coming between my bairn's heart and mine?"

"Oh, papa!" she faltered. "Oh, papa!" and broke down into a gush of tender, innocent tears.

There was a long silence then, and the poor child knelt with hidden face, tremulous, sorrowful, happy. How could he speak, and tell her his sad fears? How could he crush her fresh young dreams, by telling her that the chances were against her, and that it might be that a realization would never come; that there was scarcely a hope that a realization could come to a dream so romantic as hers. The warning had come too late. Man, as he was, he saw that, and, in his great extremity, he could only stroke the bent, girlish head, with a stronger sense of pain. There was nothing more to be said. The wrong was done already, and, through his very tenderness for her trusting love, he could only hide his doubts, and hope for the best.

He tried to talk cheerfully to her during the remainder of the evening; but it was only the shadow of cheerfulness; and when he bade her good-night, he held her in his arms for a moment, with a tremor on his square mouth,

which was strangely unlike his usual reticent self-control.

"Don't let us forget to trust each other, Prue," he said. "Don't let this strange lover make us forget what we have been to each other all our two lives."

When Marjory came to bring his bed-room candle to him, he had gone back to his place at the fire, and was seated just as Prue had found him.

She came to his side, holding the candle in her hand, and, with her usual quaint freedom and sympathy, spoke to him at once.

"Can it be helped, master?" she asked.

He raised his head with a faint smile—such a mournful ghost of a smile.

"No, Marjory," he said. "Our bairn is ours no longer. We were too late."

The winter ended as it had begun; the purple heath began to bloom upon the braes, and Strathspey was still at Coombe-Ashley. The quiet life among the quiet people had actually begun to have a sort of negative attraction for him; and, perhaps, the quiet little figure, which sat in the great rectory-pew on Sundays, held a sort of attraction for him too. The sweet young face, with its belief and trustfulness, was not a face to tire a man soon, and, in some sort, it held him captive. Sometimes, in an idle way, he had even amused himself by fancying how it would look at the stately old Coombe, and had pictured to himself the sweet, startled happiness, which would leap into the brown eyes, if he made his careless love-making a truth, and told her that it was so. Not that it had ever been anything more than an idle, whimsical day-dream, this fancy of his. It would have needed more moral courage than ever Lord Strathspey had possessed, to have faced out such a proceeding with the world—his world, which was a world not easy to face, my reader, after committing a romantic absurdity. What would Lady Strathspey have said, if he had announced his intention of ending his career, by marrying his rector's daughter. Lady Strathspey alone would have been too much for him to cope with. Besides, how would the little creature look in London, among women who would envy her for her beauty, and snub her for her humility. Poor little, brown-eyed Prue, she was afraid of Lady Strathspey, who was more gracious to her than to any living being; and how would she be able to meet the sneers and patronage which she would have to encounter, as the inferior party, in a *mesalliance* in society, to

which she was only admitted on sufferance. Even his idle day-dream never ended without such additional thoughts as these; and yet he could not quite make up his mind to flee the temptation. So the spring came, and he still lingered; one day half inclined to bring his trifling to an end, the next half touched by an indolent regret that his fate had not been a different one, or that he had not been more chary. Some faint twinges of conscience struck him now and then, when a shadow of the possible result passed through his mind. It could not last forever, and an end must come, in the natural course of events. I wonder if it is possible, that but for the interposition of a cooler hand, this quiet story of mine might ever have ended as happily as other stories have done; if it is possible that the tender, girlish face would ever have wrought upon him, so as to arouse his stronger nature to its best. (Let us, at least, give each other the comfort of believing, that even in the weakest of us there is a "best.") It might have proved so; but it was not to be. The simple life was fated to hold its quiet tragedy, and it worked itself out.

"I cannot let you talk nonsense to the little creature," Lady Strathspey had said at first; but when, in the course of time, she found that her warning had been disregarded, and that the wrong was done, her slight feeling of annoyance became something very much stronger. This would never do, she decided, in some matronly trepidation. Men had been led into more absurd things than even this might prove, she told herself, as the result of propinquity and country visits. This little daughter of the rector's was a sweet, lady-like young creature, and, if no one interfered, Angus might carry his amusement too far, and do something absurd and romantic. She was too thoroughly a high-bred woman, and (let me add) too thorough a diplomatist, to let her anxiety and annoyance reveal themselves to either of their objects; on the contrary, she extended her really good-natured condescension to the Renfrews more cordially than ever. She talked to Prue about her pensioners as unceremoniously as her natural stateliness of manner would permit; she called at the rectory once or twice, and never failed to send some graceful message of remembrance, through the rector, to his daughter; but, in the meantime, she did not forget that she had rather a difficult and delicate matter to dispose of.

Strathspey returned to the Coombe one evening, after a few hours absence, to find her ladyship seated at her desk, writing a letter. He

was not in the most cheerful of humors, and he scarcely remarked it at first; but, after a few moment's silence, she raised her head.

"I am writing to Gwendoline Foamley, Angus," she said. "I believe I forgot to mention to you that I received a letter from her yesterday, in which she speaks of coming to Coombe-Ashley. Here it is—read it." And she handed him a double sheet of thick cream-colored paper, crossed and recrossed with delicate, flowing chirography, perfumed faintly with wood-violets, and stamped with a pretty monogram.

Strathspey opened it with a slightly heightened color. He remembered the young lady well, as a superb, fair girl, with whom he had spent the pleasantest month of his life one summer a few years before, when he had chanced to meet her party at a wonderful little, many-balconied hotel, on the shores of Lake Geneva. She was a beautiful young creature, the belle of her first season then, as she had been the belle of the two seasons since; and, in spite of his claim of a distant relationship, Strathspey had only been one of a dozen others who were ready to fall at her dainty feet and worship. Still he could not help feeling a slight thrill, as the faint odor of wood-violets floated up to him, for he remembered she had been very fond of wood-violets, and had sentimentalized over them in a very pretty girlish way.

It was a very charming letter; graceful, full of pretty phrases, and nice little turns of speech; lady-like, elegant—all that could be desired, and withal, tinged with a little spirit of delicate satire, which gave it a piquant sort of flavor.

"I am weary of amusing stupid people, and being stupidly amused, dear Lady Strathspey," she wrote, "and I believe that a visit to Coombe-Ashley would be a means of recruiting me for next season's exertions. Even *debutantes* are allowed a few weeks rest from their difficult labor of charming and being charmed, and I am not a *debutante*, you know. Pray do be good enough to invite me to spend a month among the bracken with you."

"I am writing to repent my old invitation," said her ladyship, carelessly, as Strathspey returned the missive to her. "I shall be very much pleased to see her. She is a very charming girl, I believe, though I only remember her as a child."

Nothing more was said at the time. She finished her letter, and the next day it was on its way to England; but regarded, as a stroke of diplomacy, the double sheet of cream-col-

ored paper, with its soft fragrance of wood-violets, had been a success. For a moment it had blotted out the innocent face and tender eyes, the winter evenings spent in the rectory parlor were forgotten, the rector's daughter was a myth, and Strathspey had gone back to the time when he sauntered on the shores of Lake Geneva, talking the graceful nonsense to Gwendoline Framley, and carrying her dainty parasol.

But still the impression was not strong enough to destroy the older fancy completely, and, in the course of a few days, he was at the rectory again.

"We are going to have a visitor at the Combe," he said to Prue, during the evening. "You must come and see her, Miss Prue. She is a belle and a beauty; as great a belle as any of the heroines of the stories I tell you sometimes. I dare say she has even been presented at court," with a light laugh, "and broken as many hearts as there are buttons on that pretty dress of yours."

The brown eyes softened into the sober gravity, which was so quaintly natural to them.

"I think I should be afraid of her," said Prue, staidly. "I am not accustomed to grand people, and I am always afraid of them."

"So am I," said Strathspey, laughing again. "It is quite natural, Miss Prue."

It was a lovely evening. To this poor, ignorant child it was the loveliest she had ever known; certainly it was the last in which she experienced unalloyed happiness. She sat in a low basket-chair before the open window, the moonlight streaming in upon her white dress and fair face—a face so very fair and pure, contrasted in the mystic light with her great, soft eyes, that, watching her, Strathspey forgot himself, forgot the world, forgot even Gwendoline Framley, and spoke to her as men will often speak under the influence of a fair face and a sweet voice.

She listened to him with a wild thrill of happiness, her great, innocent eyes lifted up to his, as he leaned against the window, and looked down at her, more perfect and glorious, she thought, than he had ever seemed before. She looked forward to nothing—the future was nothing; it was quite enough to sit in the moonlight, and thrill at every word he uttered.

There was a box of mignonette on the window-sill, and, as he was going away, he bent and broke a spray from it.

"Do you know what it means?" he asked.

He had just bidden her good-night then, and

she was standing at his side, a quiet little ghost of a white-robed figure, with a fair, believing face.

"No," the sweet, serious voice answered him.

"It means 'My little darling,'" he said, softly. "Stay; let me fasten it in that ribbon at your throat."

He bent to secure it, and she raised her face a little—the fair girl's face, tender, innocent, truthful; and, as the moonshine fell upon its pure gravity, it thrilled him so that everything else was lost to him. He stooped a shade lower; the big, golden mustache brushed her lips—he had kissed her once, twice, thrice.

"Forgive me, little Puritan angel," he whispered; "your sweet eyes were too much for me. Good night."

And in a minute more she was standing alone, watching his tall, slender form, as he strode down the road, her heart beating in great slow throbs of tremulous happiness and pain.

She carried her mignonette up stairs to the little, white bed-room, and laid it between the leaves of her Bible, as if it had been some sacred thing, and then she knelt down in the moonlight, and prayed a tender, girl-like prayer. There was no single doubt or fear in her pure trustfulness.

His sudden, tender kisses could mean only one thing to this young creature, with her quiet life—he loved her—he loved her!

As to Strathspey, he went home with a slight sense of discomfort upon him. Possibly, he had made a fool of himself, he began to think, after a few minutes deliberation. The temptation had been a great one; but, perhaps, after all, it had been rather an indiscreet thing to give way to it. He was not an absolute villain, of course; and the idea that he had probably gone somewhat too far made him feel slightly uncomfortable.

It was not an impression likely to last long, but still it was there for the time being.

Once or twice during his acquaintance with his rector's daughter, he had actually found himself almost unwisely in earnest; and that he had been unwisely in earnest to-night, cool reflection showed him. A vision of Lady Strathspey rose in his mind, and then (shall I acknowledge it?) came the remembrance of the cream-colored letter, with its odor of wood-violets. It was odd how, as this recollection became stronger, his thoughts veered and faltered. Perhaps a few minutes before he had been nearer the dangerous weakness of doing

something absurd and romantic, as Lady Strathspey put it, than he had ever been before; but the memory of the odor of wood-violets brought him back to the world of realities. This little creature, with her gentle, Puritan ways, was not the woman to be Lady Strathspey, fair and pure as she might be; but Gwendoline Framley was another person. "I am afraid of grand people," Prue had said. Gwendoline would have "cut" the Dowager Duchess of Buccleugh herself, if she had deemed it necessary, as calmly as she would have ignored Mrs. John Smith at a charity ball.

The windows of the Coombe were brightly lighted, he saw, on reaching the lodge-gates, and, on entering the house, he suddenly remembered that his mother had told him that her guest would be likely to arrive at a late hour. It was quite possible that she had arrived a day or so earlier than was anticipated. He crossed the hall with a quick sense of expectation, and opened the door.

Yes, she had come. She was standing near a table, turning over a portfolio of engravings, the light shining upon her fair hand and delicate profile, even the simple posture which she had fallen into showing the perfection of thorough-bred grace, from the turn of sloping shoulders to the sweep of her light dress.

She had been beautiful as a girl of seventeen, he remembered; but, at twenty, her beauty had more than fulfilled its promise. Her delicate face had more repose; every feature was as clear cut as a cameo; her blue-gray, velvet eyes, under their thick lashes, had that almost impossible translucent darkness which no other eyes ever have.

She looked up as he approached, uncertain a moment, and then her face lighted as only a pretty, graceful girl's can.

"I don't think it would be easy for us to have forgotten each other," she said, answering his welcome, by giving him her slender hand. "That month on Lake Geneva would be hard to forget."

It was nothing more than a graceful, idle, girlish speech; but the translucent eyes, and the patrician face made it worth the remembering. Gwendoline Framley belonged to this world of his, which he feared so much, and, probably, the first sound of her clear, musical, thorough-bred voice, sealed the fate of the rector's daughter.

He did not call at the Renfrew's again that week. As Lady Strathspey had expected, Gwendoline Framley filled his time, and, in a certain graceful fashion, held him at her

side. Time did not hang so heavily at the Coombe, after her arrival, he found. A morning spent in the great parlor, with the windows thrown open, the breeze from the sea coming over the hills fresh with an added scent of heather, and the fair face bending over some pretty work, as he read aloud, was not so wearing after all. Gwendoline was possessed of the wonderful gift of listening well—possibly it had been a part of her young lady-like training; but, however that was, she had certainly acquired the art to perfection. She never spoke at the wrong time, never made remarks unadvisedly, always looked interested, never indifferent. Her interest was a graceful, well-trained, well-cultivated interest, and even when assumed, as in the course as her experience had frequently been unavoidable, it had never betrayed itself. Since she had been "out" she had listened to men who had bored her, and men who bored themselves; but she had always listened well: and now that she had encountered a man who was in no danger of proving tedious, she was naturally very charming. Strathspey found her so in more ways than one. Even the perfect, elaborate toilets, which appeared so adaptedly at all times, with their flower-like freshness, were an additional charm to him. Prue had pleased and amused him; Gwendoline ruled him with her conscious, inborn self-possession; and when such a man is so ruled, by such a woman, his fate is sealed for him. There was no fear of the world's opinion in this case. Gwendoline Framley had held her place from her childhood among the very people whom he feared. She had been the most popular belle of her season, and the men who would have snarled at the romance of a marriage with his rector's daughter, would envy him, almost savagely, if he won her for his wife. He was less a hero than anything else, I believe I have said already; and so, letting all these things drift before him idly, he forgot his uncomfortable sense of having done a wrong, and remained at the Coombe, playing the pleasant role of cavalier to his mother's guest, while Prue waited patiently for his coming, and her patient waiting was in vain.

She had heard of the arrival of the expected guest, and made it his excuse. Lady Strathspey would wish him to remain with them, she told herself, and it was but right that he should remain; but still she could not restrain a soft, little sigh, at the remembrance of the quietly happy days, when there had been no one to come between them.

She was half afraid, when Sunday morning arrived, at the prospect of meeting this beautiful new comer, and she dressed herself with no small amount of trepidation. The Strathspey pew was not filled when she entered the church; but it was not long before the party from the Coombe made their appearance, and the quiet little figure in the square pew near the pulpit was the first object which met Gwendoline Framley's glance. Prue looked up, and saw her as she followed Lady Strathspey up the aisle, and her first glance at the fair, reposeful face, and translucent eyes, struck her with a sudden, strange pang, so unlike her usual quiet, that she was almost frightened at it.

The sweet voice was not so clearly ready with the responses this morning, and the sweet face was not so bright. A faint presageful shadow had fallen upon it. She looked across the church at the beautiful figure, in its rich, elaborate dress, and her heart fell—the gulf which lay between their two girlish loves was so wide a one.

She passed out of the little stone porch, just as Strathspey handed his mother's guest into their carriage, and perhaps her first doubt came upon her at that moment. There was something of scarcely to be defined admiration in his eyes, as the girl smiled her grateful thanks—a something Prue had never seen before, and the faint presageful shadow grew deeper, and fell upon her sadly as she turned away.

CHAPTER IV.

THE quiet young figure of the rector's daughter stood at the rectory parlor-window, with folded hands, the quiet, young face looking out steadily at the hills, fast growing dusky purple in the deepening twilight.

It was not the face which had smiled up at Lord Strathspey, on the Brae, a few months before. There was a slight palor upon it, the sweet, serious mouth had a listless droop, the brown eyes were strained and sad, the fresh, untried-look was gone.

It was only two months since Strathspey had left her standing in the moonlight, with his kisses on her lips, and yet, in these two short months, the curtain had swung slowly upward, and the old, helpless, worn-out tragedy, which has been played so often, and so cruelly, was beginning to act itself out once more.

There was nothing novel or dramatic in her dawning sorrow. It was only a helpless, vague one—only the skeleton of a plot, without any

stage accompaniments to make it startling. It had made no change in her life as yet; there were the same things to be done, and she did them as conscientiously as ever; the same quiet, domestic duties to be performed, and not one of them were neglected; but her contentment in their management was gone. She went about the house with the same gentle attention to the every-day wants, but oftentimes Marjory looked up from her work to see her standing silent and dreamy, faint little lines showing themselves on her white forehead, and her brown eyes fixed far away.

"I don't think I am very well, Marjory," she had said once or twice; but she had never acknowledged, even to herself, that there was any cause for the change which had come over her.

She had waited, with trustful patience, at first, not understanding its being possible, that what had seemed the realization of her happiness could be a mockery. She could not believe it in her ignorance, and no shadow of the truth crossed her mind. She had seen Strathspey once or twice since Gwendoline Framley had come to the Coombe; but their short meetings had only left her bewildered, stricken, and wondering. He had called at the rectory, if the truth must be told, in the hopes of stifling an occasional twinge of conscience; but, not finding the visits satisfactory, they became fewer and farther between, and, in the end, dropped almost entirely. "It must come to an end sometime," he told himself, with a slight recurrence of the sense of discomfort, "and why not now, when there was a not too palpable apology." Every day, with the help of his new enchantment, led him farther away from the memory of the kisses he had stolen from the pure, girlish lips, in the moonlight; and with such a man, the fading of the strongest impression life can leave, is only a question of time. Perhaps she had thought as lightly of them as he had, he tried to persuade himself, and, with constant repetition, the argument became sufficiently plausible to be almost believed. "Almost," I say, not quite. So weeks passed, and Prue saw nothing of him, unless with his mother and Gwendoline Framley at church, or driving through the village, and day by day found her awakening to a new dread. She had never dreamed until now that it was very possible that the kisses and tender words had held no meaning, but that the time had passed slowly with him, and that her ignorance and trust had helped it onward. She had made every excuse for his absence which

faith could suggest; she had even tried to believe in the old palliation, that it was right that his mother's guest should occupy his time and attention; but now a new feeling was dawning upon her, which as yet she was unable to grasp in all its magnitude.

She was pondering over it, as she waited for her father, this evening. He had gone to the Coombe, a few hours before, at Lady Strathspey's request, on a matter of business, and now Prue was waiting for his return, with an expectation which was almost pain. She scarcely knew why she expected him so eagerly. He knew nothing of her trouble, she fancied, and could tell her nothing; but the fact that he had, perhaps, heard the careless, indolent voice, and seen the careless face, was enough to thrill her from head to foot.

She waited so eagerly, and with so much of vague anticipation, that when at last the door opened, and her father entered, the face she turned toward him was almost feverish in its expectant anxiety.

"I thought you were never coming," she said, with a little flutter in her voice. "Tea has been waiting for an hour, papa."

She was at his side in a moment, ready with the slippers and dressing-gown, with which she never failed. She helped him to put them on, as usual, and drew his easy-chair to the fire; but her hand trembled a little as she assisted him to remove his coat, and there was a hot spot of color on her cheek, as she took her place behind the tea-service.

There was never any alteration in her affectionate manner toward him, and she never forgot one thing which might add to his comfort; it would not have been like her to let her trouble reveal itself; but still, in these days, there was a faint, sad feeling of restraint between them. Perhaps it had arisen from their mutual desire to ignore the truth, or, perhaps, from their mutual pain; but it was there nevertheless, and, in spite of their endeavors to conceal it, ruled them. The innocent childhood was a thing of the past, at least, and each felt it to be so.

The deep lines on the rector's face were deeper this evening than they had ever been, and his grave, resolute mouth had a sadder gravity. Lady Strathspey was a thorough diplomatist, woman as she was, and had known very well what she was saying, when she made her visitor partly her confidant on the subject which was nearest to her heart.

"Coombe-Ashley will scarcely be neglected again, I fancy," she had carelessly said. "If

Angus is married, as soon as I hope he will be, I have no doubt he will make it his home, and then, of course, he will feel his responsibilities."

Her confidence had merely appeared accidental; but it had been sufficiently well arranged, and had at least conveyed the information she intended it should, namely, that her desires were likely to be consummated.

The rector thought over it, as he drank his tea, and glanced at the slight figure before him. He knew enough of the world to understand what her ladyship's speech had meant, and he was thinking of what it might mean to his daughter.

Prue sat at the head of the table, with the spot of color burning on either cheek, and an eager shadow in her eyes. She could not ask him anything. What could she ask? So she waited, with a feverish pain, to hear if he would speak of what he had seen. But when the meal had ended, and he had said nothing, her restlessness grew too much for her.

She went out to Marjory in the kitchen, and gave her orders for the night, and then lingered for a few minutes, half fearing to return to the room. She did not know, poor child, that he feared to see her come.

She went back to the parlor at last, and found her father sitting there in silence, and almost darkness. He had taken his summer seat in the deep old mullioned window, and was watching in the shadowy darkness for the rising of the moon. She went and stood near him, looking out for a few moments in silence, but at last she spoke to him.

"Did you see Miss Framley, Papa?" she asked. She did not look at him as she spoke, and the little flutter in her voice made it sound strangely low and unsteady; so low and unsteady that it gave her hearer a dull pang.

"Yes," he answered, "and Strathspey, too, Prue."

Her heart beat heavily. It always did beat at the sound of that name; but now its echo forced it to a stronger throb.

In the pause that followed the rector pondered gravely. If she was clinging to any hope, she must be undecieved, and who but himself could undecieve her. She was too young to feel the pain long, after the first wrench was over; but it had been her first young dream, and the pang must be a strong one which tore it from her. He did not understand that, young as she was, this quiet, girlish romance of hers might be as hard to kill as the romance of a woman. He pitied

her; but he pitied her as the innocent child he had loved, whose childhood was now lost to her. He had not awakened to the full truth yet. "Poor little bairn," he said to himself, and then glanced upward at the slight figure in the shadow, with its face to the window.

"She is a very beautiful girl, this Miss Framley, Prue," he said, at last.

"Yes, papa," she answered, without moving. "Lady Strathspey was telling me to-night," he went on steadily, "that she had hopes that she would hold his lordship at Coombe-Ashley. I have no doubt she will, when they are married, as I think they will be."

The slender figure stirred faintly, but very faintly, and then Prue made her reply.

"It will be better for Coombe-Ashley," she said, slowly.

He had not anticipated that she would display any great emotion, but he had expected to see more than this. It almost relieved him, and his fancy that her youth would make her pain slighter for her, returned to him with more of reassurance than it had offered before, and made him speak more cheerfully.

"Yes," he said. "It will be better for Coombe-Ashley, and better for all of us. Miss Framley is a very fitting Lady Strathspey."

Prue made no reply. She stood silently watching the clouds brighten above the hill-tops as the moon rose. She was thinking steadily of the one thing.

The rector rose from his seat at last. It would be best leave her alone, he thought.

"I have some work to do," he said to her, "so I must go to my room. Good-night, Prue."

"Good-night, papa," she answered, steadily, and then he left her.

She did not stir after he was gone, and she found herself alone. The moon was just flooding the rowan-trees with its shining light, and she watched it movelessly, and in silence.

Men had amused themselves with women often before, as women had amused themselves with men; other women had awakened from foolish, tender, delicious dreams of happiness; but few women had ever awakened with such a shock, leaving behind in the past so much of innocent faith and ignorant trust as this poor, little, desolate Prue. Until the morning she had met Gwendoline Framley in church, she had never even dreamed that the wide difference between herself and her lover could be an obstacle; she had thought of nothing but her love, and this love had been so girlish, so foolish, so trusting, so pure. She saw it all now. She had been led on blindly to this end, while he—

She stopped here, remembering the handsome, careless face, and the eyes which had smiled her down. Her heart began to beat wildly; it was only a girl's heart, and the handsome face and smiling eyes had won it from the first. She could not blame him yet—a woman might have done so, a girl never. I almost think that if it had been possible to blot out all the remembrance, with all its present and future pain, she would have chosen to keep the memory, rather than stand where she had stood twelve months before, losing the recollection of the blonde, cavalier face, and the great thrills of foolish bliss it had brought her. There were so many memories. There, upon the hearth, he had kissed her hand the night she wore the white fuchsias in her hair; here, at this window, she had waited a hundred times, only to see him pass by with his gun slung over his shoulder; the box of mignonette still bloomed upon the sill; the faded, little brown sprig lay between the leaves of her Bible up stairs, and this moment she felt the touch of the great golden mustache upon her lips, and heard his footfall ring upon the walk as he passed out in the moonlight. Would he never come back again? Perhaps not. She found herself imagining blindly how the old life would seem when she returned to it, and, looking forward, with a great shuddering pang, to the time when Miss Framley would come to the Coombe as Lady Strathspey, and sit in the velvet-hassocked pew, week after week. She could go no farther than that, without the wild heart-beating, and she slipped upon her knees before the empty basket-chair, flinging up her arms—she was so crushed, so stricken.

The shadow of the trouble had been upon her so long, with its constant torture of changing hopes and fears, that she was too weak to bear it. Now it was becoming more than a shadow, and she felt her strength drifting away from her, so she knelt. The helpless, hopeless wearing had been too much for her.

She rose at last. It would not do to remain there any longer, she told herself, and she must go to her room. She had heard Marjory moving about in the kitchen for an hour, making preparations for retiring, and she went out to her, as she always did, to bid her good-night.

But at the kitchen door she paused, strangely dazzled by the light, and Marjory looked up at her to see her wavering, with white lips.

"Don't call papa, Marjory," she said, helplessly. "Please don't call papa;" and the next instant Marjory had caught her as she fell.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

“THE TROUBLE AT LAWDER'S.”

BY A. M. EWELL.

THERE was trouble at Richfields plantation. Indeed, when was there not trouble at Richfields, of all sorts but poverty? For some ugly traits of character, growing like fungi to the Lawder family-tree and transplanted with it from worn-out English ground, seemed only to be fattened and nourished by the rich new soil of Maryland. Dark hints of crime, attempted or committed, lingered like a bad odor through all the family traditions. Tales of the Indian chief, who, coming as a friend, had been treacherously murdered under the roof-tree in Colonial times: of a negro slave, killed by a blow from the master's whip-handle: of a gambling-debt, which, ruthlessly exacted from the wife and children of a luckless neighbor, had added many acres to the already immense plantation—all these stories, and many others almost as bad, were kept alive by the black people, who delighted to tell them to each other and to the Lawder children.

Mr. Thomas Lawder, with whom our story has to do, was a miser—his avarice of that far-sighted kind which passes at first view for generosity. “Mars'r allus keeps us up ter de wu'kin'-p'int—strong an' fat. We's plenty eatin's, plenty clo'es, an', fo' Gawd, we pays de price,” old black Uncle Samson was wont to remark, with a laugh of untold cynicism. And it was true: everything at Richfields was kept in paying order. The house was handsomely appointed and comfortable—after a certain material fashion—the ladies of the family richly dressed, the slaves well housed and fed, the horses for work and pleasure excellently kept, and they all paid the price. The master was himself the only starved-looking creature at Richfields: a small, delicately-made, keen-faced man was Mr. Lawder, with bright eyes whose cruelty of expression flashed out like a sharpened knife at any time that his will was crossed: and, for several months before the time of which I write, his will had been constantly crossed by another as hard and strong.

It was one warm sunshiny morning in October, 1807, that the Lawders were all gathered in the breakfast-room at Richfields. The windows looked southward over a large well-kept garden, beyond which lay, at a dead-level, fertile corn-fields where the cutting-process was almost done, and a wide stretch of tobacco-ground with great

drying-houses scattered here and there. Within the room, all was suggestive of wealth and comfort: rich furniture, well-trained servants, and gleaming silver on a table most bountifully spread. But the stalled ox at “Lawder's” was too bitterly sauced with hatred, to be pleasant eating; and, this morning, there were no happy faces gathered around the table. Mrs. Lawder at the head—a pretty, frail, cowed-looking woman, prematurely old—poured out the coffee with trembling hands, making more than one mistake as she did it. She loved her son, and, with incredible tenacity of affection, loved her husband too—no wonder that her nerves were shaken by the present state of things. And Mistress Patsy Lawder! It is not possible to compress her charms into a few short sentences. Some people had declared that volumes might be written thereupon, without exhausting the subject; but then they were in love. She was a tall comely creature, whose shape could not even be spoiled by a gown made in the then prevailing fashion, with waistband passing across her bosom and just under her armpits; her neck was well set on splendid shoulders; she had hazel eyes, and bright brown hair dressed in loops and curls on the top of her head. She had also a frank lively manner, stigmatized by her lady-friends as “bold”—being, in fact, charmingly audacious in her happy moods: though she could be grave, too, and think to some purpose, as her straight brows and well-defined jaws might indicate. This morning, she was quiet enough, poor girl—pale and downcast, with not a word to say.

Just opposite to her, sat Mr. Charles Lawder, her first-cousin—being her father's nephew—one who had lived at Richfields all his life, and worn, with better grace than a less sweet-tempered person may have done, the chain of Mr. Thomas Lawder's bounty. His fair-tinted, handsome, though rather feminine, face and soft-blue eyes, meeting his Cousin Patsy's dark ones with a frequent and unmistakable glance, were in marked contrast to Ben Lawder, who sat beside him. That young gentleman, the son and heir, was big, strong, and lusty, with features pleasant—except his eyes, which were too much like his father's. Usually frank and roughly jovial in manner, he wore, this morning, a stolid sullen

look, returning thus Mr. Thomas Lawder's glance, which showed, just now, its cruellest expression. Again and again, during the past few years, had Mr. Lawder been called upon to pay his son's recklessly-contracted debts, and a fresh discovery concerning that young spendthrift's extravagance had been made the day before: being the fact that certain tradesfolk in the city of Annapolis, twenty miles away, could wait no longer for their money; that there was also a bill run up, by too generous "treating," at Mason's tavern, in that same place; and, besides, a "debt of honor" to be paid. Mr. Thomas Lawder, though fond of his son Ben, in his way, was also fond of his money; and, in this instance, the strain on heart and purse was a little too much. His silent rage had perhaps never been so darkly impressive before, though he only said quietly that he would go to Annapolis this very day, and settle the business.

"Must I go with you to-day, sir?" asked Ben, breaking silence at last, when that most cheerless breakfast was nearly done.

"No, sir—no. Not you," was the contemptuous yet bitter reply. "I want to get at the truth to-day, and I've a notion that will be sooner done without your lying by-play and turning things wrong-side-out."

"Very well. Truth is a fine thing. I won't spoil your pursuit of it," said Ben, curtly.

"And I give you fair warning, sir—and all at this table bear witness—" here Mr. Lawder pushed his chair back and stood up straight, speaking in his quietest, most vindictive, rasping tone, "I give you fair warning, that this is the last money you will ever get from me. My money, my estate, is my own, to do with as I please: and I please to leave it to no reckless fool." His words were full of hard and steady purpose, and they had their due effect. Mrs. Lawder burst out crying, and said:

"Oh, my dear Thomas: surely, you don't mean that?"

The blood rushed to Patsy's face, the tears to her eyes. Ben looked less sulky and more resentful; and Charles Lawder, who, besides being fond of Ben, had a nervous horror of "scenes," turned red and white, writhed in his seat, and bit his lip till the blood came.

"That's all I've got to say, sir. You know, when I mean a thing, I mean it," added Mr. Lawder, and walked out of the room—out of the house, soon after—and, mounting his horse, rode off to Annapolis.

It was a bad beginning for the day, which dragged on wretchedly enough for those he left at home. Mrs. Lawder went to her room, with

tears and a headache for company; Ben took himself off, with his gun and dogs, on a ramble; while Patsy and her Cousin Charles were left to consult over this, as they did about every event their days brought forth. It had never needed any formal declaration between these two, their habitual confidence and sympathy having run, lifelong, in one channel. Patsy had many lovers, and honestly enjoyed their admiration: maybe she was a little coquettish; but Cousin Charles had no fear, and felt no jealousy, knowing her too well. Mr. Lawder would have thought his nephew a poor match indeed for Patsy: and Charles, aware of this, had been lately somewhat fretful against his uncle's strong will and his own weak one, that kept him where and what he was. But he had never spoken to Patsy of marriage; such a possibility was yet very hazy in his own mind. He did not know that it existed at all in hers; they were happy as they were—or, at least, as happy as Mr. Thomas Lawder's temper would permit any of his household to be. On that morning, Patsy's tears gave occasion for some harmless caressing. He wiped them away with one hand, while the other—small, soft, and womanish—clasped her waist, as he coaxed her back to smiles in those sweet gentle tones of his. She was then inclined to think that "papa" could not—did not, must not—mean what he had said. But Charles, in spite of his desire to agree with her always, could not deny the opposite conviction.

The day passed slowly by, and twilight came without bringing, as was expected, the master. Ben came home to his supper, looking sullen and hard; Mrs. Lawder kept her room; the servants, well knowing that something was wrong, whispered in corners, and solemnly enjoyed this storm-preceding quiet, after the manner of their race and kind. They all went to bed a little later than common, that night, and still the master had not come.

"I feel like something would happen—or had happened. I wish he would come back," said Patsy, just before the good-night, going anxiously to a window.

"Maybe he'll stay all night at Mason's. Don't worry," said Charles, to comfort her; while Ben, who was staring moodily at the fire, spoke not a word. And, still silent and gazing, she left him.

Patsy was unusually wakeful, that night; eleven, twelve, sounded from the big hall-clock, and still she could not sleep. The night was starlit and warm as summer, stirred now and then by faint breezes. Her windows—on a side of the house away from the garden—were open,

admitting the outside noises; and there seemed, to Patsy, to be a great many. The dogs barked a good deal, and one of them howled—most dismal of all sounds. Once she thought she heard the trampling of a horse's feet; but this died away, amid a fresh outbreak from the dogs. Then, later on, she fancied an outcry, as of someone in fear or pain: whereat, springing from bed, she went to the window and listened; but there seemed nothing to hear but the rustle of dry fallen leaves. To her nervous fancy, there was something ominous and sinister in the very beauty and warmth of this unseasonable night. A good sharp honest frost, or a dashing autumnal rain, would have been more natural and better suited to her mood. She looked out into the soft-gray starlit haze, with a strange foreboding of evil; then, going back to bed, fell presently into fitful sleep.

She woke later than her custom, to find the sun well up—shining like a red ball, in the hazy gray-blue sky. "Oh, I hate this weather," she sighed, over her toilet. "The season and the times seem all turned wrong-side-out." Going down into the breakfast-room, she found her Cousin Charles hovering over the fire that, for form's sake, had been kindled in the fireplace. He shivered when she entered, and, raising his face, shocked her with its haggard, worn appearance. He was pale, with a strange, set, painful look about the mouth and brow, and there were dark circles around the eyes, that met Patsy's with an expression she had never seen therein before. It was like the backward reflection of some recent horror or suffering, and a "cold obstruction" that was not apathy, but resistance to her gaze. She noticed, but could then define, the change, as if some invisible door had been shut between them; and, in after-days, her consciousness brought it forth with added meaning.

"What is the matter?" was her greeting.

"The matter with me? Nothing—nothing. A little headache—that's all."

"I don't wonder," she said, "nursing the fire, this morning. I'm sick with heat."

"Sick with heat?" Another shiver. "I am chilled, through and through."

She looked at him—earnestly, keenly.

"Charley, what is the matter? Didn't you sleep last night?"

"Yes, yes. How you plague me!" he said, more impatiently than he had ever spoken to her before.

She went to the window and looked out, to start back with an exclamation:

"What—what are they doing? Ploughing in the garden! Who ordered such a thing?"

The garden was laid off in smooth grass walks and trim squares; such a thing as a plough had never been in it before; but now a plough, drawn by two horses and guided by Uncle Samson, was at work—cutting right across one of the walks, mangling the flower-bed that edged a square, and spoiling the whole orderly arrangement.

"Oh, it's too bad! too bad!" cried Patsy, stamping her foot. "Who has had this done?"

"The ploughing? Oh, that's all right. The weather is fine for that sort of work—the soil needed a thorough turning-up," said her cousin, starting eagerly.

"Why, Charley, it has that every spring. This was never done before—it spoils the labor and growth of years. Did papa order it done?"

"The sod can be laid again, those bunches of pinks re-set," murmured he, ignoring her question.

"Did pa say it must be done?"

"Yes, yes. Why do you make a fuss? Women know nothing of what the soil needs. You make my head worse, with your fault-finding."

Patsy looked at him, astonished; his tone was new to her.

"Upon my word, sir! Who is fault-finding with you, sir? If he said it was to be, why should you be blamed?"

"Yes, yes, dear child. I know you didn't mean it. I am half crazy with this ache. Forgive me."

"Oh, poor dear, let me stroke away the pain," she said. No danger of the offer being refused, though the pain seemed past the exorcism of her white fingers.

For awhile there was quiet, while she stroked his forehead, he sitting with closed eyes; but, presently, she flitted to the window again, and, standing there, had a new idea.

"Charley, I tell you what I'll do: I'll have that tangle of raspberry-bushes there, in that corner, dug up and planted in a row along the edge of the ploughed ground. This is the very time for such transplanting. I'll do it—that I will."

"No, you will not—you must not. Don't think of such a thing," said her cousin, lifting his head with uncalled-for energy and a wild gleam in his eyes.

"Why not?" she asked, with a pout and frown. "Why not, if I choose, and it's for nobody's hurting? Even papa wouldn't cross me in such a little fancy. Am I such a child, that I can't have my own way in setting out a bush? I will do it, this very day—there!"

"Patsy, my own sweet girl, don't do this—"

"don't meddle with those bushes—for my sake. 'Tis a fancy of mine—only a fancy. I know it seems a little thing—ridiculous; but, for my sake, let them alone."

He laid his hand on her arm with an earnest appeal—rather ludicrous, under the circumstances.

"But why shouldn't I have my fancy, too? You are so queer, this morning—I can't make you out."

She turned crimson and burst into tears, just as the door opened to admit her brother.

Ben looked dull and sullen, his eyes slightly bloodshot.

"What's all this? What are you crying for, Patsy?" he asked. Whereat Patsy told her cause of anger, with some petulant sobs.

"No, I won't have the bushes moved or the garden meddled with," said Ben, roughly, as if in a mood to contradict, adding a muttered oath: "Let 'em alone, and don't be such a silly child."

"You are not master here, sir, nor likely to be," was her retort.

"Oh, well, wait till the real master comes home, and settle it then."

Patsy was lost in amaze; that her careless brother and most tractable cousin should join to oppose her in such a small matter was past comprehension.

"I'm sure I wish that he would come," she sighed, presently. "It is high time."

"Perhaps he has found more congenial society than that of the thieves and swindlers here," said Ben, with a laugh, whereat Charles Lawder shuddered and looked down.

But the master came not, that morning, nor any morning afterward; and, by the next day, a black shadow of mystery had settled over Richfields plantation. Ben rode to Annapolis and came back with the news that his father had started home the evening before, at sundown, and had been met on his way thither by several people. As we know, he had not reached it, nor could anyone find out by any means what had become of him. Mr. Thomas Lawder had as entirely disappeared as if the earth had opened and swallowed him. Mrs. Lawder, half distracted, urged on the search, Ben and Charley Lawder spent days and weeks in pursuing it, the neighbors gave their help amid great excitement and many dark surmises, all to no success. The evening after the disappearance, his riding-horse was found—with the saddle on and part of the broken bridle hanging from his neck—cropping grass on a waste bit of common, two miles from Richfields. There was no sign of hard riding or fright about the horse, no blood-stains on the

saddle; but the rider was gone—clean gone. There were no proofs of a murder having been committed; no dead body could be found, though every wood and thicket between Richfields was searched, every stream dragged. Mr. Lawder could have had no motive for suicide, and was certainly not the man to run away or go in hiding; but the fact that he was gone—dead, to all intents and purposes—remained. A kinder man would have been more regretted; as it was, his wife did her full share of grieving; but others, even his children, had few tears to shed, though the dreadful mystery had its full effect upon them.

Ben gradually stepped into the place of master, which right was given him in the only will his father had left. In this will, made two years before, the great landed estate was left to Ben: there was a small sum of money for Charles, a handsome support for Mrs. Lawder and Patsy, and so, according to this will, matters were settled at Richfields plantation. Ben was a more comfortable head of the house, a kinder master than his father; but the days were dark and heavy for them all. Mrs. Lawder was crushed and sad; Ben's old rough good-nature was turned to moodiness, and he spent more time than ever before in lonesome rambles with his dogs; even Patsy's high spirits had failed; and, as for Charles, who still made his home with them, it was indeed a change that had come over him.

His old light-hearted gayety was gone; and a lethargic dullness, broken by nervous fits, seemed to possess him. His nights would seem spent in pacing to and fro, his days were fitful and wretched, and, as nights and days passed by, it was no wonder that he grew sallow and emaciated. "My dear boy, you don't eat enough to live. What has come over you?" was his aunt's constant remark, ignored with dull indifference. His sensitive nature soon found out that people noticed his state of mind and body, that his appearance before outsiders or away from home was followed by suspicious looks, whispers, cold avoidance on the part of some, and this knowledge was not likely to better his disease, whatever that was. The Lawders had been too prominent in the well-acquainted country neighborhood, to evade notice now. They were discussed accordingly. Indeed, the mystery concerning Mr. Thomas Lawder furnished a never-ending source of talk, and—without any disrespect to human nature be it said—of course, enjoyment too. "Who was guilty in the matter?" was the great question, and slowly but surely the answer asserted itself: "Charles Lawder."

As to the proofs, they began with the curious change in him, dating from that time, and were considered strong by some whose power of "putting two and two together" was undeniable. It was urged that his father had been a very bad man; that the Lawder blood was bad blood, and had more than once broken out into crime; then everybody knew that old Lawder had tyrannized over Charles, and that there was no love lost between them.

True, Charles had not inherited much by his uncle's supposed death; but he had always been devoted to Ben; and Ben, good generous fellow, would share the last dollar with him. Then, last but not least, Charles had always had a haukering after his Cousin Patsy, and it was very well known that her father would never allow that match. In spite of these apparent motives for guilt, this easy tracing of cause and effect, there were some who urged that Charles, whatever his inherited "badness," had always been gentle, sweet-tempered, kind as a woman to all weak lowly creatures, forgiving, and weak of will. But this short-sighted reasoning was put down; Charles's guilt was established in society, and himself shunned as if he had the plague. The more imaginative busied themselves with where and how the midnight-assault had taken place; where and how the body was concealed. Long after the Lawders had given up the search for it, some of their neighbors continued to seek—meeting, perhaps, a sharper disappointment. There was one other source of presumptive evidence much dwelt upon: Ben Lawder was said to suspect his cousin; he certainly avoided him, and their former confidence seemed broken up. For what other reason could it be?

And Patsy—who loved Charles Lawder, and knew him better than anyone else in the world—what of her? Strive as she might against it, the breath of outside suspicion, which she was quick to detect, stirred an answering fear in her own breast. She tried to forget, but could not, how her cousin had been, that fatal morning. Was it remorse for a dark and fearful deed that had looked from his white face then, that was eating his life out now? Could it be possible that, to prevent Ben's disinheritance, and to clear a path for his own love toward herself, he had—Thought always broke off in a shudder before the question was formulated; but it would come back to haunt her. The discussion about the raspberry-bushes, the ploughing done in the garden, that morning, were also darkly suggestive. Did that tangled thicket, in the far corner of the wall, conceal any dreadful thing? What bloody traces of crime had the ploughshare

hidden? She could not bear to set foot in the garden; but it took on—especially that far neglected corner—a fearful fascination for her eyes and thoughts. Her old habitual love for Charley was not weakened by this fear, this almost certainty, that would not let her go: it was only changed and deepened by a passionate pity. She would have gone to prison or to the gallows with him; would have walked round the world on sharp stones, barefoot, defying all mankind, for his sake.

Patsy's love for her father was a mixture of pride and duty, and had little to do with her heart—not wonderful, considering what manner of man he was; but now she was honestly shocked at the turn her own feelings had taken. The murdered man was her father—most people would have said, not a bad father, too; and even the idea that Charles was his murderer—or, at least, guiltily concerned in his death—even this could not arouse one spark of the natural loathing toward her cousin: on the contrary, he was dearer to her, in his remorse, his isolation, his misery, than ever before. Reason stigmatized her as unnatural, as being herself criminal—indeed, beyond the pale of humanity—and flaunted the naked facts before her mind; but her heart cried out on the other side, and would not be silenced. But the conflict wore out her youthful heart and strength; as months went on, she paled and faded, her eyes grew haggard, her rosy cheeks sunken and dim. She was much alone with Charles; but there was silence between them, like an invisible wall. They had been used to sit hand-in-hand, with pleasant familiarity; but there was nothing of that now: she sat by the couch whereon he lay more constantly every day, sunk in miserable silence—her lips dumb, her head bent over her work.

One day, she thought that he fancied some shrinking in her manner: for, with an earnest look, he said suddenly:

"Patsy, do you trust me?" She faltered a moment, and he added: "I mean, do you trust me in what concerns yourself?"

"Yes," she answered, steadily.

"Do you love me, Patsy?"

"Thou knowest that I love thee," she said, with high-strung solemnity of mood, that brought the quotation naturally to her lips.

He still looked doubtful, and said:

"Give me your hand." She did so, with a grave unshrinking gesture, and he held it, clasped it tentatively, as if waiting for a sign, as if feeling the pulse of her moral attitude toward himself. There was no quiver of the palm, no

faintest repulsive gesture of the tender steadfast fingers; he pressed it to his lips and to his heart with a sob, and gave it up as one might a last hope of salvation. "Dear child—dear heart! God bless you, my own! Something stands between us; I can't tell what now. I think I'm dying by inches. Maybe, at the last, I can ease my heart of it all." Perhaps he was hoping that she would draw him out to tell it now, and the momentous question was actually on her lips, she feeling that any confession, even the worst, would be better than this; but her heart sickened, and the words died away unspoken.

So month after month went by, until the coming of October, a year after the disappearance of Mr. Thomas Lawder. The very anniversary of that day, when he rode away for the last time, came around—warm, bright, and summer-like—bringing with it the vivid remembrance always deepened by such exact repetition of minor circumstances; and, that pleasant afternoon, a crowd of unusual visitors came to Richfields. Mrs. Lawder was, as usual, shut up in her room: and Ben, Charles, and Patsy were, for a wonder, all three together in the sitting-room, when a servant ushered them in—old Doctor Baywood, Mr. Strong, the gentle little white-haired minister of the parish, several other gentlemen who were among their nearest and oldest neighbors, and a strange man whom nobody introduced. The solemnity of all their faces may have been laughable, under some circumstances; but, in this instance, it only brought strange foreboding to hearts already sick and fearful. Charles roused himself to sit up wearily on the sofa, where he had been lying all day. Patsy shrank back into a corner behind him, dreading she knew not what. Ben welcomed them rather coldly, and they all took seats bolt-upright, with the air of men who had a hard duty to perform.

Doctor Baywood and the minister looked at each other; they all looked at each other uneasily; and at last the good old doctor, who had known the young Lawders all their lives, cleared his throat, and, with great effort, began.

"Charles Lawder," he said, "maybe your conscience tells you what business it is that brings us here to-day."

Charley's sickly face turned a shade paler; but he lifted his head up with more dignity than perhaps he had ever shown before.

"My conscience has nothing to say about it, sir. Perhaps you will enlighten it."

"Charles Lawder," went on the old man, more sternly, "this time a year ago, your uncle disappeared from our midst, in the night-time,

with no evidence of circumstance to show the right or the wrong of that matter. But there is another kind of evidence, sir; and by that you have been judged. Miserable boy, what has been eating your heart out? What has brought you to what you are now? Your guilt has told on itself; and, besides, all know how your uncle's taking-off advantaged you. 'Murder will out' is the old saying; such black doings call for punishment from all law-abiding citizens. Charles Lawder, in presence of all here assembled, I charge you with the murder of your uncle—Thomas Lawder."

Dead silence followed the last words, and all eyes were fixed on Charles Lawder. The bright-red spot that had burned on his cheek when the old gentleman began had changed to a deadly paleness; but his hand did not tremble, as he laid it on a table near-by, and, turning half-around, looked at his Cousin Ben. The glance was solemn, piercing, almost stern, and it directed all eyes to Ben's face, which had grown very pale, but showed no other sign of fear or agitation.

He returned the other's gaze, for a moment; then, as if drawn by resistless influence, rose and came forward in their midst, looking round upon them all—hard, resolute, defiant.

"Well, if it's come to this," he said, in a hoarse but steady voice, "if you meddling fools come here and force a double murder on me, I'll make a clean breast of it. I killed my father."

He paused, breathing heavily; Charles hid his face with a groan, Patsy gave a faint choked cry; but the others were dumb with horror and surprise. He went on hurriedly, as if eager to tell all:

"We had parted on bad terms, that morning when he left. I was restless, that night, and couldn't sleep, and was walking about out-of-doors, late, when he came. He left his horse at the stable, and came up to the house through the garden. I met him there. We had some hard words, and he threatened to cut me off without a cent. He meant it, too." He paused, moistened his lips, drew a long breath, and went on again: "There's a devil in me, when I'm roused—you all know I came honestly by it. I struck him, and we fought. He got me down, and I stabbed him with my pocket-knife. Wait—listen! Let's have it all out. I hid the body: buried it in a gully washed out between the garden-wall and a thicket of bushes down there. Charles helped me about that. He came and caught me at it. Nobody could have been worse cut up than he was about it, but he wasn't going to help put a rope around my neck. He

stood by me, and it's gone hard with him, as you can see. I never thought of it's being laid on his shoulders. We turned the horse, saddled and bridled, loose in the public road. That's all. I'm ready and glad to give myself up."

A half-hour later, he had said good-bye to his horror-stricken, weeping, half-crazed mother, and started for the county jail, escorted by the strange man, who happened to be a sheriff, and some of his old neighbors. Not till the close of that distressing long-remembered day did Patsy have a chance to speak with her cousin. Then, still wretched, wan, and broken, but with some faint sign of relief in his eyes, he came to her and asked: "Patsy, one thing I must know. Did you believe I did it?" She leaned against the wall, sick with the revulsion, the dreadful certainty, that the day had brought, and answered: "Yes."

"And if it had been true, Patsy?"

"God help me," she said, "I'll say the truth. It may have been the ruin of my soul, but I'd have loved you still."

Ben Lawder escaped from prison before his trial came off, and, fourteen years afterward, news of his death in the far West came back to his old neighborhood. His crime formed a hideous climax to all the Lawder wickedness, and people consoled themselves for the mistake about Charles by the fact that it proved, no less than Charles's guilt would have done, the inherent badness of the Lawder blood: a theory freshly aired when, two years later, Patsy married her cousin. They lived at Richfields—old Mrs. Lawder, Patsy, and Charles; for, though the place held fearful memories, their happiest ones hovered about it, too. Charles Lawder never recovered from the ravages of that terrible secret, but was always nervous, sickly, and oppressed by melancholy fits. His dependence on Patsy brought out the strong, noble, protective traits of her character. They were true as steel to each other, and, as years went on, the dark shadow of crime that had spread over their lives was pierced by soft gleams of happiness and peace.

TWO DAYS IN THE MAMMOTH CAVE.

BY CHARLES J. PETERSON.

A DAY's journey south of Louisville, in the heart of the wild Kentucky hills, you will find the Mammoth Cave.

You know nothing of darkness until you have traversed its subterranean recesses. It is a labyrinth groping blindly through primeval gloom, for hundreds of miles under ground: and the darkness that fills it is palpable, enveloping you like black waters. Night, in our upper world, is never so profound but it has something of day remaining. A nebulous radiance, as of faint rays infinitely diluted, may be seen even in the murkiest hour: wandering gleams from sun, or moon, or star, penetrating the clouds, and vaguely diffused through the abyss of space. But in those silent depths night reigns eternal and supreme. No sun, nor moon, nor star has ever shone across that awful obscurity. There darkness sits devouring his prey from everlasting to everlasting.

The entrance to the Cave is scarcely a hundred yards from the hotel. Winding down a rural road, that you suppose leads to some secluded dell, you find yourself, on turning a sudden angle, in presence of the grim portal. Huge and vague it yawns before you, like the mouth of some great dragon. A spring breaks out from the mountain side just above the entrance, and the water solemnly dripping down across it, seems to warn sacrilegious feet against profaning the mysteries beyond. In vain your eye attempts, for a while, to penetrate the darkness. The shadowy gloom makes you draw back instinctively, with a momentary sensation of horror. For the deep night within is not all! Forever, forth from the monster's gaping throat, issues a chill, unearthly breath. With a single step you have passed from a July atmosphere to one that seems as icy as December. But while you still hesitate, oppressed with vague emotions, the guide approaches, and handing you one of several torches, leads the way downward. You follow, with a last look at the blue sky, muttering unconsciously, "*facilis descensus Avernus*."

A narrow passage soon brings you to an open gateway, where the quick blast of air nearly extinguishes your lamps. So far the light of day has attended you, though waxing fainter and feebler at each step. But now you are alone with night and silence, twin daughters of eternal chaos; and you pause, for a moment, to recover courage. At first you see nothing but the thick

darkness. All around is vagueness and unutterable loneliness, giving the idea of infinite void and space. The black rocks do not reflect your light, but devour it; and so, for a while, the battle goes on, a strife of life and death. Gradually, however, the pupil of your eye dilates. Gradually also the torches begin to melt away the gloom. You now see that you are in a vast, but rudely fashioned rotunda, whose walls of solid limestone rise dizzily above until lost in lofty shadows overhead. Slowly the light, radiating upward into the black darkness, reveals a gigantic dome resting on oval ribs of rock, ring within ring, narrowing to the top. You gaze in wonder and delight; it seems as if you could never gaze enough. For, in those profound recesses, the obscurity ever keeps the imagination on the stretch, and if a life-time was spent there, something would still be left to stimulate curiosity. At last you move forward, but without a word. Your sensations, in reality, are too profound for language. And still, ever as you go, the night hangs, like a sullen cloud, before you, parting reluctantly to admit your passage, and greedily closing up behind.

You now enter an avenue, lofty as the nave of St. Peter's, with huge, jutting platforms of dark, grey rock on either side, like colossal cornices. Gradually this avenue emerges into another, and even vaster hall, with galleries on galleries circling above, wheeling and ever wheeling around the dusky ceiling. Here, in former times, the Methodists were accustomed to hold occasional meetings; and the effect of the congregation, with its countless torches, is said to have been very striking. To give you an idea of the magnitude of the room, the guide ascends to one of the galleries, where he seems a pigmy, so great is the distance, so massive the ledge on which he stands. Leaving this immense amphitheatre, you enter what appears a Gothic Minster, the high and vaulted avenue stretching on until it fades into remote obscurity. And ever as you go the darkness continues to envelope you like black waters, reluctantly parting before, and ravenously closing up behind.

Suddenly you see before you a huge sarco-phagus, apparently hewn from the solid rock. It is of a size to suggest thoughts of the Titans who warred against Saturn, or of those mysterious giants who are said to have lived before

the flood. You pause with strange awe before it. It stands there on its lofty pedestal, so grey, so grim, so weird, that the unlettered slave as he hurries by, glances fearfully at it in secret dread. Nor is it he alone that feels its influence. The breath comes thick as you gaze, for imagination whispers that, within this mighty tomb, reposes perhaps some wizard of colossal race, whom enchantment has laid to sleep, and preserved through untold centuries, to guard these sacred recesses; and who, if light jest, or desecrating touch should profane the spot, would burst his cerements of stone, and amid the rocking of earthquakes and the crumbling of the mountain overhead, drag you down to darkness and death. So you pass by with noiseless feet, gazing askance on this grim relic of the Pre-Adamite world.

Continuing your progress, you enter an avenue through which an army might march, nor shake, with its tramp, the adamantine walls. For a while the passage runs straight as an arrow. Then it turns majestically, almost at a right angle, the opposite side wheeling grandly around like a dusky Colosseum. All at once the groined nave overhead disappears. You seem to have passed out into the open air; but, if so, it is day no longer: the midnight vault of heaven hangs above you; mountains as black as doom sweep away before. High aloft an enormous rock, arch-like, springs from the precipice, but stops, shattered through its midst, as if by a convulsion that has shaken the world. Looking past that broken, massive edge, and away into the illimitable space beyond, you see a star faintly shining in the far, fathomless depths. You gaze in amazement. But now another and another begins to glisten; whole constellations follow; and soon the entire firmament sparkles with myriads of glittering lights. You are still looking, bewildered and enraptured, when all suddenly becomes black, as if the curtain of doom had been let fall upon the scene. Darker and yet darker it grows. You cannot see the companion you touch. The gloom of Egypt's fateful night could have been nothing, you think, compared to this. At last, in the remote distance, you discern a faint gleam. Slowly it brightens to a ball of fire. Then, as you look in wonder, all at once there streams toward you, spanning the gulf of darkness, a bridge of light, as when, in Milton's sublime poem, the gates of hell are flung open on the fathomless abyss of chaos. You cannot, for a moment, comprehend that all this is an illusion. But the cause is soon revealed. The guide comes up, and explains that the seeming stars were the glimmer of the torches on the crystals of the roof; while the sudden darkness resulted from his disappearing, with the lanterns, into a lower cave. The gush

of light, that shot athwart the gloom, had been caused by his emerging suddenly, he tells you, at a distant point, above the line of vision. And you say to yourself, "stupendous Cave, that could allow of such an illusion."

And now, retracing your steps in part, and ever attended by the darkness, like black waters enveloping you, you pass into a narrow lateral avenue. Winding through a labyrinth of passages, now broad and high, now cramped and low, here straight, there spiral, but ever descending downward, you enter, at last, what seems the crypt of an ancient Saxon cathedral, the stalactites and stalagmites meeting to compose the rude and massive pillars. The guide now distributes the torches of the party so as to illuminate the cavern to the best advantage. Amazement, for a while, keeps you dumb. Never, you mentally exclaim, did artist conceive such wonderful effects of light and shade. The broad glare immediately around each torch is the brighter for the profound gloom in the mysterious recesses. The columns, that stand out in bold relief, are the more distinct because so many darken into shapeless masses in the distance. The river of golden radiance, that pours down the long arcade before you, has a glory all the more effulgent, in contrast with the rippled gleams that dance, in alternate brilliancy and blackness, along the broken vista stretching to your right. Rembrandt, could he have seen that spectacle, would have broken his pallet in despair.

We traversed many miles, that first day in the Cave, and yet were only making a preliminary excursion, as it were. The grand tour, requiring a walk of twenty miles, we left until the morrow. To visit every part of the Cave would involve the labor of weeks, for the aggregate length of the avenues is computed at three hundred miles: hence few persons spend more than one, or at most two days in it, as a complete exploration is practically impossible, and these are sufficient for the most striking portions. The Cave is, in reality, a vast labyrinth, honey-combing the mountain limestone of Kentucky, occasionally expanding, as we have described, into halls of almost fabulous magnitude, and sometimes narrowing into avenues scarcely ten feet wide, and proportionally low in altitude. In various places the passage comes apparently to an end, a yawning, well-like gulf debarring further progress. But when you look down the chasm, a ladder appears; the guide bids you descend; and arriving at the bottom you find a new and probably spacious avenue opening before you. Not unfrequently these pits are crossed by wooden bridges, that hang dizzily over the stupendous gulf. Or they gape close at your side, black as a night of murder, fathomless as space itself. As you

gaze fearfully down them, they recall the awful chasma, which, in that grand prose-poem, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, appaled Christian in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. In vain a torch is hung over the edge, no bottom is ever seen. A bit of oiled paper, cast blazing down, fails equally to reveal the secrets of those mysterious recesses. A stone, dropped over the brink, falls and falls, seemingly forever, endlessly reverberating until the brain reels with the iteration. And ever, as you gaze, you hear water, far out of sight below, dropping further down into the awful abyss, and still dropping, dropping, dropping, through everlasting silence and gloom.

We started, on the second day, immediately after breakfast, our guide carrying our dinner nicely stored in a basket, while over his back was slung a canteen of oil, from which to replenish our lights during the long journey before us. And to do justice to Stephen, he is as great a wonder almost as the Cave. The handsomest, sprightliest and most obliging of mulattos, I still see in fancy his brilliant dark eyes, his well trimmed moustache and his light graceful figure. He has picked up something of Latin, and possesses a smattering of Greek; while his geological knowledge quite astonishes his unscientific visitors. But he is most remarkable for his readiness at repartee and his amplitude of words. I shall not soon forget him, as flinging himself on the ground, at a pause in the gothic chamber, he descanted on the formation of stalagmites, with the knowing air of a savan and the careless ease of a spoiled child. He has been, for seventeen years, acting as guide through the Cave. Many of the most beautiful parts of it were, indeed, first explored by himself. His old master, but lately deceased, in gratitude emancipated him; and Stephen now talks of bidding the Cave farewell forever, and emigrating to Liberia. Should he carry out this intention the world will hear more of him. But there is a wife in the way, who is somewhat loath to go, and prefers to live and die among the green hills of Kentucky. Woman, the world over, clings to her home. Woman is your true conservative. The most astonishing thing in the Puritan emigration was that so many females accompanied it: and if we eulogized the Puritan fathers less, and the mothers more, we should do greater justice.

We turned to the right, just back of the giant's coffin, and entering a lateral avenue pushed briskly on. The way was occasionally rugged, but oftener comparatively level. Now the passage narrowed to a width of scarcely ten feet, now it widened again: and now the groined vault soared in air, gloomy and grand as in some sepulchral cathedral. Frequently jutting

galleries of rock, running along either side, nearly met on high; and often, through the narrow opening thus left, other galleries were seen above; sometimes three or four rising, tier above tier, before the vaulted ceiling was reached. These vast recesses, which the torches only dimly revealed, floated in a sea of obscurity, as if just emerging from chaos on the morning of Creation.

About two miles from the entrance, the guide bade us stop. Pointing to a small aperture in the side of the Cave, less than a yard square, he told us to wait a few moments and then look in. With these words he disappeared. Directly, through this opening, a vivid light shone forth, while simultaneously we heard his voice shouting aloud. Gazing through this natural window, we saw a vast pit, sinking downward further than the eye could penetrate, and rising overhead till lost in obscurity. This tremendous chasm was not circular, however, but shaped like the letter S, and wild and vague beyond conception. The vivid light, which Stephen had left us to ignite, could not, with all its intense brilliancy, entirely dissipate the horrible gloom. As if bored out of the solid mountain, by gigantic augurs, the chasm sunk beneath, or soared dizzily aloft, the smooth surface of the yellowish rock reflecting the glare of the torches, for a space above and below, and then the night swallowing all the rest, like a black, insatiate monster. This was Gorin's dome. As we gazed down into the awful gulf, we mechanically held fast, for it seemed that if we should tumble through, we should fall and fall forever through illimitable depths of space. Fall and fall forever, from darkness to darkness more profound, through infinite eternities of distance and despair.

A walk of another mile, past yawning pits and over hideous chasms, brought us to a low, narrow avenue, several hundred feet long, where we were compelled to proceed in a stooping posture. The Cave continuing to grow more circumscribed, we finally found ourselves traversing a serpentine path, worn through the rock by the action of water in countless ages, but so confined that a corpulent person would have found it impossible to pass. We had scarcely recovered from the fatigue of this cramped journey, when suddenly we came to a vast and lofty amphitheatre, with a sandy beach in its centre, in front of which lay a pool of black waters, like a lake of polished jet. All further progress appeared hopelessly cut off. On every hand the steep and rugged sides rose impassably, melting, without apparent break, or even seam, into the lofty dome overhead. While we were scanning the wild walls for some hidden outlet high up the dizzy acclivities, the guide called our attention to a boat,

drawn up on the beach, and bade us enter, smiling at our Bewilderment. We took seats, but wondered the more. And now, with a dexterous turn of the paddle, he whirled the light skiff across the pool, and right against the face of the rock, to where a small horizontal fissure offered invitingly a sheltered nook for the still waters to slumber in. Telling us to stoop quickly, he shot under this low portal. For a short distance the roof continued to impend threateningly overhead; but gradually it began to rise, to expand, to swell into magnificent proportions. A few more strokes of the paddle, and we were in a vast tunnel, arching far away above, and winding onward beyond the range of vision: while filling it from side to side, flowed the subterranean tide on which we floated, a dark, and voiceless current, dwelling forever in aboriginal gloom.

It was the famous Echo river. For three quarters of a mile we navigated this mysterious stream, till suddenly it vanished out of sight as unexpectedly as it had appeared. I can find no words to express my sensations during that voyage. It was like sailing over a shadowy ocean, such as I had sometimes seen in dreams. It was like passing down dim shores, from which blew, chill and damp, breezes out of the land of death. As we glided along, the lights, which were ranged in the prow of the boat, projected vague figures on the wall, that followed us menacingly like silent, eager ghosts. The dip of the paddle, disturbing the quiet waters, sent a faint ripple lapping against the rocky side of the tunnel; and the sound of this, repeated in low echoes, indefinitely prolonged, seemed like the sobbings of disembodied spirits, lamenting and dying in the distance. And yet no feeling of horror accompanied all this. It was like one of those vague, yet sadly sweet dreams, which often visit us in childhood, when we seem to float, in the wide sea of space, close to unseen coasts, from which ascend the sighs of widows and orphans, though all the void elsewhere is full of whispers from angels encouraging us to proceed. Blessed visions, that, while they conceal not the gulf of sorrow which ever surges below this mortal life, reveal glimpses of the shining bliss beyond, and assure us of the presence of heavenly messengers, who wait to bear us thither.

Allowing these emotions to have their period, our guide sought finally to divert them, by showing the effect of singing on the river. He broke, at first, into a wild and plaintive air. The echoes that followed seemed endless. Nor did they run into each other, as is usual even in the finest repetitions of this kind, but each syllable was distinct and clear, as if sad voices answered to

sad voices down the whole vast length of the silent stream. A gayer strain ensued, that was prolonged, in a similar manner, like the musical laughter of maidens at play along the shores. And so, whiling away the time with merry interludes, we voyaged along. But gradually the melancholy of our feelings returned, and lapsing into quiet we floated once more dreamily on. Again we seemed to be sailing down a sea of shadows. Again breezes from the land of death were wafted chill and damp across us. Again the dip of our paddle woke the sobbings of unseen phantoms, that fitted lamenting before, and followed wailing, behind.

By rugged ways, and through continually winding avenues, we reached, at last, the great series of caverns known as Cleveland's Cabinet, seven miles from the entrance. Here bountiful Nature has exhausted her munificent genius in the number, variety and beauty of her crystallizations. In one place, the rock is covered with a botryoidal formation, resembling bunches of grapes, perfect in both color and shape. In another the crystallizations seem enormous snowballs, flung carelessly against the ceiling, and there adhering, whiter than whitest swan's-down. In still another, they imitate rosettes, carved in Carrara marble, and affixed, by some subtle cement, to the grey limestone wall. In yet others, the crystallizations assume the form of hanging moss; or of drooping lilies; or of other delicate, lovely plants: all white as the robe of spotless innocence. A small niche, opening from the main avenue, like a side altar in a cathedral, is called the Maiden's Bower; and is hung with similar snowy draperies of Nature's handiwork.

At last we drew near to a mountain of boulders, piled one above another in inextricable confusion, and rising to the very summit of the Cave. We were about to pause here, believing that further progress was impossible. But Stephen bade us push forward. These were, he said, the Rocky Mountains, which it was necessary to surmount before we could reach the end of our journey. We struggled up the difficult path, the roof of the cavern rising with us. Having attained an elevation, which our guide told us was nearly a hundred and fifty feet, but which appeared incalculably greater, we paused panting on the summit, and looked down into the gulf beneath. Involuntarily I caught my breath as the scene burst upon me. Would I could adequately describe that dark and dismal abyss. So wild was the descent, and so shadowy the obscurity below that the hill seemed to plunge downward to the very bowels of the earth. The effect was magnified infinitely by a vast dome, which soared above, savage and vague, increasing the apparent height and depth, and

exaggerating the awfulness of all. As I gazed into the void below, where the black darkness surged and heaved, under the flare of the torches, like the ebon sea that washes the shores of hell, and then turned above to the seemingly fathomless firmament, there rose, vividly, to my imagination Milton's sublime lines: and unconsciously I repeated them to myself.

"A dark
Illimitable ocean, without bound,
Without dimension, where length, breadth, and
height,
And time and space are lost: where eldest Night,
And Chaos, ancestors of Nature, hold
Eternal anarchy."

It was a fit conclusion to our journey. The delight, amazement, and awe, which had succeeded each other all day, terminated here; and for one I wished to see nothing further, lest it might mar the image of that tremendous abyss. It was with relief, consequently, that I heard the guide declare there was nothing to be seen beyond, except some curious stalagmites, a lady's bower, and another bottomless pit, at the distance of a few hundred yards. Should other avenues ever be discovered in advance of this point, the effect will be to dim the impression of that gulf of horror. But now the spectator comes away, haunted by his glimpse into that wild abyss, whose recollection lingers in his memory, and recurs forever in his dreams.

On our way back, we dined at a spring, about two miles from the extremity. It would have kindled the dull blood even of an anchorite, to have seen us discuss the cold chicken and ham which Stephen had provided. Our drink was the cool, clear water from a neighboring spring. These springs are frequent in the Cave, some of them being impregnated with sulphur, and others with lime. The one we patronized was of the latter description. Around us were numerous empty bottles, relics of former parties, who not having the fear of the Maine Law before their eyes, had refreshed the inner man with Scotch ale, London stout, claret or *eau de vie*.

While my companions lingered behind to re-examine some crystallizations, I pushed forward alone, the solitude and sombre shadows of the Cave having for me a greater charm. To abandon your party in this way, requires a certain degree of courage. At first there is something exhilarating in the consciousness that you are out of sight of your friends, and that, when you shout to them, however loudly, only the echo of your voice comes back, through the long and lonely halls. But soon the sense of solitariness becomes painful. The gloomy walls closing in on every side; the narrow circle of light that radiates from your lamp; and the utter, utter desertion around, that encloses you as in a solid body, fill

you with vague fear. And now dreadful doubts creep in upon you. What if you have missed the true path, by unconsciously entering some lateral avenue? Perhaps already your companions have passed the spot where you turned off, and, if so, they will continue to pursue their way, believing you still leading in advance. It will not be until they approach the entrance, probably not until they reach the hotel, that your loss will be discovered. Then, too late, they will retrace their steps. Vain search! Of the hundred and more lateral avenues, that branch off from the main route, in the seven miles between you and the mouth, who can tell which to take? To explore all would require months. You see these things in fancy, and your nerves begin to give way. You imagine yourself having made, through long, long hours, vain attempts to recover the trace, and having sunk down exhausted. You have shouted, too, until your voice has failed you. You are agonized with thirst. Days appear to pass. You are starving to death. If, as you have heard, men lost not far from the entrance, have not been found for forty hours, what hope is there for you? Your lamp has long ago gone out, and you have no note of time. Only you know that death is approaching. Despair seizes upon you. You look dumbly on the sombre walls, now your prison, soon to be your grave. You recollect that you will be deprived even of Christian burial. For the search after you, though long persevered in, will finally be abandoned. Gradually the horror of your disappearance will fade from the minds of all, even your wife and children coming to regard you, in time, only as a dim dream. Perhaps, years hence, some adventurous traveller may stray into this avenue, and finding your bleached bones, may recall a tragedy he remembers to have heard in childhood. He will gather the relics together, and lay them in a corner. But that will be all.

So vividly do you imagine these things that when, at last, a faint gleam appears in the distance, you fancy, for a moment, that it is Stephen coming to your rescue after days of search. But in reality it is your companions leisurely following you. At first you see only a speck of light, like a fire balloon in a black firmament. But soon others appear; the dark and distant ceiling glows; and a gush of light dances toward you, revealing the welcome figures in the background. In a moment you are laughing at your late fears, and have resumed your journey, as gay and merry as the best. You walk on, and on, and on, until mile after mile is passed. Your great peril now is that of stumbling, for your eyes are on the rocky draperies overhead, when they should be picking out the rugged way

beneath. Almost every square foot of ceiling, cornice and wall is curtained, or festooned in stone, as if Nature, to mock at human genius, had decorated these silent, buried chambers. By one sweep of her graceful arm, by a single bold arrangement of her tapestry, she continually produces effects that artists could have attained only by severe study and long trials. She is equally at home in gay and fanciful hangings, such as those belonging to the Bride's Bower, as in the sombre masses, like impending thunder-clouds, that darken with horror her more giant chambers.

In returning, Stephen called our attention to a river, in which fish without eyes are caught. We did not stop, however, to secure any. Stephen had spent a night, just before we arrived, in catching several, so that he had a stock on hand. These fish are rather longer and larger than a man's finger, with something of the shape of a

cat-fish, and of a greenish white color. They have no eye. Why should they, living, as they do, in eternal night? But it is to be presumed that Nature, which ever wisely adopts the means to the end, has given them a keener sense of touch. Besides these blind fishes, there is no living thing found in the Cave, except a species of cricket.

Though we walked briskly, it was four hours before we reached the entrance, so that, deducting for the delay at dinner, the time consumed proves the distance to be quite nine miles. The first view of daylight, as we approached the mouth, was indescribably beautiful. To see that cool, white brightness, which language is too weak to describe, is worth alone a journey to the Cave. It is a new thing in your experience: a glory and a loveliness beyond imagination.

And thus we left the land of shadows; and came forth again to the day!

TWO OF A KIND.

BY FLETCHER REEDE.

IN the drawing-room of one of the brown-stone houses that crown the hill opposite Boston Common, sat Miss Dorothy Atkins Miller, the eldest of three sisters—who, having already appeared in society as “buds,” were now in various stages of bloom and blossom.

Lillian, a tall graceful girl of nineteen, stood by the open window, half hidden behind the lace draperies that swayed back and forth in the light breeze; while Grace, the youngest, bent over her embroidery, absorbed in the mystery of the latest Kensington-designs.

The air was full of the indefinable freshness and fragrance of early spring. A hand-organ, that had appeared as silently and almost as mysteriously as the crocus-buds beneath the window, was grinding out a wheezy welcome to the April sunshine. Little patches of green lay here and there on the Common, like hopeful prophets, in the sun, the sparrows chirped noisily in the trees, and the faint sweet odor of opening maple-buds mingled with the heavy perfume of the hyacinths in the window.

“Lillian,” said Dorothy, looking up from the paper which she had been reading, “I have found my mission.”

“Have you?” inquired Lillian, with languid interest. “And what may it be, pray?”

“Don’t scoff, Lill dear,” answered Dorothy, “but listen.” And, glancing down the column of “Wants,” she read the following item:

“‘WANTED—An intelligent and comely young woman, capable of doing plain and fancy cooking. She will be received as one of the family, in a quiet country home. Address Mrs. Helen Henderson, Maplewood, Vermont.’

“There!” exclaimed Dorothy, waving her paper. “Am I not comely? Am I not intelligent? And can’t I do plain and fancy cooking, after a three-months’ course with Miss Parloa and Mrs. Lincoln? The place was evidently made for me, and I for the place.”

“But, Dolly,” exclaimed Grace, “you are not really in earnest? You couldn’t take a servant’s position and expect to be received in society again.”

“Nonsense!” replied Dorothy. “Society needn’t know anything about it. Society will be politely informed that I am spending the

summer with my aunt, in the country. She is our aunt, you know. Don’t you remember the winter she made mamma a visit, just before I came out, and how she reviled us, one and all? ‘Boston girls,’ she said, ‘could do nothing but attend Browning clubs and French classes and dance the german.’ Now, I will show her that they can do all that, and something else beside. Mamma will give me a recommendation.”

“Mamma will do nothing of the kind,” interposed Lillian, from the window. “She has engaged rooms at the Falmouth from the first of June, and Goldthwait is to begin on our dresses to-morrow.”

Dorothy looked up with a bright smile.

“Lillian, you and mamma ought to be glad to have me off your hands, especially when I relinquish, once and forever, all claim to those charming toilettes which Goldthwait is concocting in that wonderful brain of hers. Think of the peachbloss silk, Lill, and the India embroidery, and be grateful for my inspiration.”

“You dear girl!” exclaimed Lillian, moved to enthusiasm by the generosity of this unexpected offer. “But what are you to gain from it all?”

“Success!” answered Dorothy, dramatically. And, seizing her sister by the waist, she waltzed gayly around the room to the strain of the untiring hand-organ outside. Just then, a caller was announced.

Dorothy glanced at the card.

“‘Mr. Clement Rich.’ Give him my excuses, please. I have an important letter to write—a business-letter connected with my arrangements for the summer. Don’t betray me, girls.” She hastily disappeared through one door, just as the caller entered by another.

Mr. Clement Rich was a young man with a good figure and a prospective fortune. There was absolutely nothing to be said against him, and he was greatly admired by all discreet and sensible mammas.

If the lines of his mouth indicated irresolution and indecision, no one was the wiser: for his handsome blonde mustache was so well trained as to conceal the fact in a manner that was both clever and becoming; and, if the young ladies voted him dull, they must have been very exacting to expect nature to bestow all her good gifts on one person.

If Mr. Clement Rich was not intellectual, neither was he arrogant; if he was dull, he was good-tempered; and the annoyance which he experienced at being deprived of the pleasure of the eldest Miss Miller's society found no expression in the gentle suavity of his tone and manner.

He had fallen into the habit of depending on Miss Dorothy to guide the conversational frigate of an evening's call; and, at first, feeling somehow as if he had lost his bearings, he was puzzled how to proceed. But, if the conversation moved less briskly than was its wont, it was also less exacting; and, to a person of Mr. Rich's ability, it seemed quite as pleasant, now that he had tried it, to drift quietly with the tide of aimless talk, while he allowed all his energy to become absorbed in the contemplation of Lillian's fair face.

He had for a long time considered himself hopelessly in love with Miss Dorothy, but he missed her much less than he would have expected; and when, at parting, he told the young ladies that he had spent a most delightful evening, he did not feel that his immaculate conscience had been stained by even the shadow of an untruth.

Lillian went upstairs with a half-smile on her lips, that made her look prettier than ever. As she looked into Dorothy's room to say good-night, she hesitated a moment, and then said abruptly:

"Dolly, are you sure—quite sure—that you want to go to Vermont?"

"Perfectly sure," answered Dorothy, with emphasis.

"Because," said Lillian, "I ought perhaps to tell you that Mr.—that a certain person—is to be at the Falmouth, this season; and, if you are not there, I am afraid—that something may happen."

Dorothy took her sister's delicate face between both her hands, looked into the blue eyes until the faint blushes came and went in the girl's cheeks, and said gayly:

"Let it happen, dear—mamma will be very well pleased."

Lillian turned away, with a little shamefaced sigh of relief.

"I really am glad that Dolly doesn't care," she said to herself: "I have thought, sometimes, that perhaps she might." And she went to sleep with rosy dreams floating before her eyes, satisfied that, in the end, everything would arrange itself quite to her satisfaction.

Early June found Mrs. Miller and her two younger daughters settled at Long Harbor, where

a brilliant season was predicted—and, in fact, already begun, according to the society-column of the leading paper of the place.

"How much your poor dear papa would have enjoyed all this," observed Mrs. Miller, plaintively, as they stood together on the upper verandah overlooking the beach. "He was so fond of the sea, although so absorbed in business, poor man, that he never had time to devote to needed recreation."

Mrs. Miller did not often indulge in sentimental or painful reflections, but it seemed proper that her daughters should be reminded occasionally of the fact that they once had a father, who, it is true, disappeared from their view so long ago that they were in some danger of forgetting him. He had been a quiet man of simple habits, and, having provided for his family an ample fortune, which seemed to be all that was expected of him, he had unobtrusively exchanged this world, with its ever-changing tide of events, for the serenity of that changeless world which we have all been taught to consider a far better one.

Mrs. Miller would have considered herself deeply sinful if she had not been resigned—and no one ever ventured to assume that she was not; but certain events had transpired of late which made her feel the loss of her excellent husband in a very real and practical way.

Many of her investments had proved unfortunate; and, unless a certain combination of railroad-magnates could be brought about, her confidential agent warned her that nothing less than financial ruin was to be expected.

However, there was no use in pulling down the blinds before the house was sold, so she put the best possible face on the matter—arrayed her daughters rather more gorgeously than usual, was especially cordial to Mr. Clement Rich, and very properly thankful that Dorothy had taken a fancy to pass the summer where she would add neither to her cares nor her expenses.

Dorothy's letters were full of enthusiasm and delight over her new life.

"Aunt Helen has no idea who I am," she wrote. "Of course, I have changed in five years, and, when I introduced myself as 'Dolly Atkins,' the girl whom she had engaged to do plain and fancy cooking, there was not the slightest hint of recognition in her face.

"You can have no conception of the feeling of exhilaration it gives one to prove to oneself that one is capable of earning one's own living. Aunt Helen is more than kind, and treats me like a daughter rather than a servant. And the cooking is a great success. Everybody praises it and everybody has a prodigious appetite.

"Aunt Helen—or Mrs. Henderson—has a Cousin Gerald staying here: a young man whom the whole household admires, down to the dog and the cat.

"He only came for a week, but he declares now that he shall stay all summer—and has 'hired out,' as they say here, with Mr. Henderson. I don't know whether it is the biscuit—of which he eats an enormous number—or something else which tempts him to prolong his sojourn.

"Of course, his being the hired-man and my being the hired-girl throws us together a good deal: and, although this country-life is absolutely delightful, I am not sure but it might be a little dull at times if there were no one in the house beside Mr. and Mrs. Henderson."

"I didn't know that Helen had relatives by the name of 'Gerald,'" said Mrs. Miller, thoughtfully, as she read the letter. "They must be some of Mr. Henderson's family from Northern New Hampshire—obscure farmers, I suppose."

Meanwhile, the days and weeks were hurrying by.

June, with its singing birds and orchards smothered in apple-blossoms, had passed, and midsummer was at hand. The green world seemed in a languid dream, the birds were silent, and the long grass in the fields hardly stirred, so motionless was the air, save as it fell beneath the mower's scythe.

Dorothy sat on the back porch, watching the men at work in the fields, listening half unconsciously to the monotonous droning of the flies, and feeling as if, for the first time in her life, she were really happy.

The sunny outlook from the house, the surrounding hills, with their ever-changing shadows, and the simple country-life, with its freedom from restraint, were all inexpressibly delightful to her. There was but one little cloud, and that no bigger than a man's hand, to mar her happy serenity.

Only the day before, "Cousin Gerald" had told her that he had about made up his mind to remain with Mr. Henderson for the rest of his life, and Dolly felt almost sure that it was not altogether on account of the biscuit. "Of course," she said to herself, "if he knew who I was, he would not dare to think such thoughts." And then, in a more generous mood, she said to herself: "He is far too much of a man to waste his life in a little country-place like this. I will tell him so, and then go home."

But, although Dolly was not wanting in courage, she did not immediately put her excel-

lent resolves into execution. Sober second thought convinced her that she had been inexcusably conceited and unmaidenly; that it might, yes—it might possibly be the biscuit, after all; so she remained, and July merged into August. As Mrs. Henderson watched her Cousin Gerald and her pretty young handmaid sitting together on the broad stone step that led to the lilac-shaded porch, talking, evening after evening, in the old, old fashion of youths and maidens, she thought of her own youth and smiled not disappointingly.

One afternoon, early in September, Dolly went into the orchard for apples. They lay on the ground in lavish profusion, and it was altogether unnecessary for Cousin Gerald to leave his work and come to her assistance.

Because he chose to do so, however, Dolly chose to blush, and, as she felt the warm color mounting to her cheek in such an uncalled-for and exasperating manner, she became all at once convinced, by some inscrutable feminine logic, that the time had come for her to put an end to the innocent deceit which she had been practicing for the last three months.

"Mr. Gerald," she said, as they turned toward the house, "I am going away to-morrow. Perhaps I shan't have any better opportunity to say good-bye."

"Going away?" he echoed. "Isn't this very sudden? Has anything happened? Are you dissatisfied?"

"Yes—no. What I mean is," said Dolly, suddenly embarrassed, "I didn't expect, when I came, to stay here always, and I think perhaps my mother will be glad to see me by this time."

"I have no doubt she will," said her companion, planting himself in front of a tree in such a way as most effectually to bar Dolly's progress. "I should think she might. You have never told me very much about your mother, by the way, or where you live. Perhaps you will be willing to do so now."

"There is not much to tell," answered Dolly, demurely. "My mother is a widow, and there are three of us girls. But what I wanted to say, Mr. Gerald," she continued, with a sudden rush of words lest her courage might desert her, "if you will excuse me for saying it—and we have been such good friends I think you will—is that I can't help feeling as if you were doing yourself an injustice by staying here. Of course, it is very pleasant for a while; but, if I were your sister, I should tell you that you were throwing yourself away and wasting your abilities."

"I am rather glad, on the whole, that you are not my sister," remarked the young man, appar-

ently quite unmoved by Dolly's criticisms; "but tell me what you would like to have me do. I should be willing to do a good deal."

"Oh, I only thought that, if you ever had any plans for another sort of life and knew that I—that other people took an interest in them, it might make a difference."

"It would make a difference—a great difference," said young Gerald, earnestly; "and you do take a little interest in me," he added, "even if you are not my sister—a very little?"

"Yes," admitted Dolly, looking up from under her hat. Then, as he started forward, with what desperate intent he himself only knew, she continued, breathlessly: "But not enough for that—oh, no!" And she made a little rush past him, disappearing through the trees in a manner which she always afterward regretted.

"It was so undignified," she reflected. And then she reproached herself for her blushes and needless confusion, atoning for her misdeeds by bidding them all good-bye, the next morning, with unapproachable dignity, and assuring Cousin Gerald, as he helped her into the cars, that she had left her address with Mrs. Henderson.

Then the train rolled away; she shed a few furtive tears, but dried the salt drops with angry resolve.

Six weeks later, she was sitting with Lillian in the back parlor, discussing family affairs. Indeed, they had done little else since their return, for Mrs. Miller could no longer conceal the fact that their fortune was irretrievably lost, and there were questions of the greatest importance to be settled. Lillian, as the betrothed of Mr. Clement Rich, had an assured future.

"Of course," said Dorothy, "I can take care of myself; I can cook, and mamma can live with you; but what are we to do with Grace and her everlasting embroidery? Now, if this tiresome Mr. Farnleigh had only proposed for Grace instead of me, everything would be right."

"But, Dolly dear," said Lillian, in her most soothing tones, "you are very brave, of course, and independent; but you know this Mr. Farnleigh is perfectly unexceptionable. Mamma says that papa used to know him. He saw you once somewhere, and fell in love with you at first sight; and I'm sure, Doll, I can't see what else you can ask for."

"Lillian, you have no more heart than a kitten. If he fell in love with me, I didn't with him. I don't even remember his face; and I am going to write this minute and tell him that I can't and I won't think of it."

"But you won't say it in just those words," interposed Lillian, with a gentle air of expostulation. "Do be cautious, Dolly, and—well, it wouldn't do any harm to wait a day or so, and think it over. I am sure I wouldn't be rash!"

"No, you wouldn't," exclaimed Dolly. "But I would rather be rash than calculating."

At that moment, Grace came in with a card. "It is Mr. Farnleigh," she said, "and he wants to see you, Dorothy, in the library."

"Then I shall be spared the trouble of writing a letter," said Dolly, scornfully. "Very kind in him, I am sure, to call for his dismissal," and she left the room.

Dorothy was gone a long time, and the two girls awaited her return with impatience.

"I shouldn't think it would take so long to say no," said Grace, meditatively. "If it were yes, now, one could imagine how it might."

"Certainly," admitted Lillian, with an air of experience, "one might."

At length Mrs. Miller, who had also been summoned to the library, came upstairs, looking more contented than her daughters had seen her since the failure of the house of Lee, Hubbard & Sons, which had involved them in its downfall.

"Mamma, do tell us what it all means," called Grace.

Mrs. Miller sat down in an easy-chair and rested her head against its high-cushioned back.

"Mamma," repeated Grace: but, before Mrs. Miller had time to reply to the eager query, Dorothy came in with her own explanation.

"Come down," she said, "and be presented to your future brother-in-law, Mr. Gerald Farnleigh. I have known and—and liked him all summer, but it did not occur to me to ask if Aunt Helen's Cousin Gerald had any other name. He allowed me to call him Mr. Gerald, and now he declares that I was as much of an impostor as he."

"So you didn't refuse him, after all?" said Lillian.

"Why, no. I—I was so surprised that I—I suppose I forgot it," answered Dolly. "At all events, it is too late now."

UNDER THE SHADOW.

BY JOSEPHINE POLLARD.

CHAPTER I.

My father having died when I was quite young, the property he left me was placed in the hands of my guardian, and accumulated considerably before I attained my majority. I had been practicing law for several years in the town of W—; and, though my clients were few, I had, by dint of prudence and economy, eked out a sufficient income. My wants never exceeded my means; and, having little or no fondness for society, that clamorous maiden made but little demand on my purse or person.

But the old routine became monotonous. I felt the need of change; and, while I was musing one day, I happened to think of a use to which I might put my patrimony. I immediately wrote to my former guardian, for whom I still retained a sincere friendship, stating my wishes, and, in due time, received the following answer to my communication:—

"DEAR DUDLEY—Your letter came in the 'nick of time.' A little cottage, just out of our village, has been for some time to let. The ominous shingle has been waving in the wind for several months. I bought it at a bargain; and, as you gave me *carte blanche*, I have also secured the services of a housekeeper, and a maid of all work, who have been duly installed and are awaiting your arrival. Hoping to see you soon, I am, as ever, yours,

PRESTON LEE."

I had such confidence in my guardian that I felt sure he had done the best he could, and all that was necessary. He had ever looked upon me as his son, having had none of his own; and, though I had seldom visited him, I felt certain that the house which held him was a home for me, if ever I was in need. I determined to leave W— the day after the receipt of his letter, and take immediate possession of my home.

The idea of having a house of my own! Master of an establishment! I already began to feel the dignity of my position, and was as consequential as it is possible for a modest lawyer to be.

Having packed up and despatched the small

stock of furniture I possessed, with the addition of a few necessary articles, and bid my landlady "Good-by," I turned my back on the town of W— and took the cars for Stanhope Village. I stopped at my guardian's, to inquire the way, and then followed the direction to the cottage, in order to superintend the arrival of my household goods.

The place took me by surprise. I had expected to find the grounds, if there were any, in a neglected state: the walks strewn with the debris of summer foliage, and the house itself wearing a look of desolation. Instead of this, autumn flowers were blooming gaily; the walks, though not extensive, were smoothly swept and graveled; even the windows of the house were open, and over all was an air of comfort and cheerfulness.

I thought there must be some mistake. But while I stood in a state of doubt, who should come forward but Mr. Lee, the good man, to welcome the bachelor to his home?

"It's all right, Dudley," he said. "The girls have been at work. Miss Allen, the housekeeper, has a good deal of taste in such matters, and, between them, they have quite transformed the place. Come in, come in!" he added, without waiting for me to speak; and I am sure I could not have spoken just then. "The girls are only waiting to see the proprietor, and we must travel home."

We entered the house together, and, in the room which was to be especially my own, and where the familiar look of things made me feel quite at home, I found two females, rather advanced in years to be termed "girls," but real sensible, and real good-hearted, as I had ample reason to confess.

I saw nothing of Miss Allen, however; but, as the opportunity for doing so would necessarily be frequent, I concluded to say nothing about her.

Well, the deeds were made over to me, and the surplus fund—which was more than I anticipated—was deposited in the bank to my credit.

I met Miss Allen, for the first time, at supper. She was rather younger than I expected; and if I had been a susceptible man, I might have

blushed to the roots of my hair. But I did nothing of the kind.

She was one of those cold, quiet individuals that you sometimes meet with, and she actually imparted a chill to every mouthful I ate. I overcame the feeling after awhile, and attempted to draw her into conversation; but as her replies were mostly in monosyllables, I soon grew discouraged. I went twice a week to W—; for I did not intend, by any means, giving up my practice—and it was so pleasant to come home in the evenings and find a light burning and some one waiting for my return. The house being small, there were many hours when Miss Allen was free to sit down with her needlework, which she did every afternoon, in the dining-room, opposite my "sanctum." I thought it strange that I never heard her singing at her work; always the same stern, dignified composure. She knew her position, however, and I had no fault to find. But human icicles are not very pleasant company; and the more she chilled me, the more I felt determined to thaw her out.

I was busy at my desk, one morning in October. The waving of the vines that were festooned about the window made flickering shadows over the manuscript I was copying. I looked toward the dining-room. It was warm and cheerful in comparison. Gathering up the articles I was using, I moved toward that apartment and transferred them to a convenient place by the vacant window.

I could see Miss Allen's hand flutter over her seam; otherwise she manifested no concern.

"I found the light extremely unpleasant in the west room," I merely remarked, as I seated myself, pen in hand, to resume my copying.

I could see that she felt the awkwardness of her position; and the more embarrassed she grew, the more determined I became. She was preparing for a move. Feigning irritation over some intricate portion of my work, I "pshawed" every now and then. This decided her, and she arose.

"Ah! Miss Allen," I said, as she was about passing me, "I am sorry to trouble you, or call you off from any of your duties. But, would you mind lending me your assistance?" She halted. I handed her the manuscript, with the request that she would dictate while I wrote. She could not well refuse, so drew her chair near and commenced reading. Her voice was very sweet, though mournful, and wavered considerably at first. But as she continued, it grew firmer, and we succeeded admirably. I thanked her.

"I am glad to be useful," she said, and resumed her sewing.

I grew to looking forward, with pleased anticipation, to this time; for it became a regular duty with us; and as the evenings lengthened, I read aloud to her, while she sewed. I never thought there was any danger in this way of living.

About mid-winter, a case came on of unusual interest. The best legal talent of the state was engaged, and my mind was so absorbed by it that I gave but little thought to anything else. In fact, I was absent from home much oftener than usual.

The prisoner was a noted counterfeiter. For years he had eluded the vigilance of the authorities; but now he was arrested on a charge of forgery, so boldly and yet so skillfully accomplished that one could not but admire the genius of the man, while condemning his principles.

I was called on to assist in the proceedings under lawyer Harvey, and had, of course, much writing to do. At first I had not felt the necessity of asking Miss Allen; but time was pressing, and, my duties becoming arduous, I summoned her to my assistance.

She began reading, at first slowly, and with distinct enunciation; then, as she proceeded, her voice grew husky, her breath came short and quick.

In the midst there came a dead silence. I did not look up, merely nodding to her to continue; but there was no sound. I glanced at her. She had turned to marble, I thought; her eyes were fixed and glaring, her arms rigid, her hands clenched.

I called Jane, the cook, from her work; for I was frightened, and could not think of a single restorative.

"Poor thing!" said Jane, coming in quietly, but flushed from her exertions over the fire. "Poor thing! She's a bit feeble, Mr. Evans, and she can't stand much."

That was a cruel stab! But I forgave Jane when she went vigorously to work, and, by certain manipulations, the efficacy of which I might appreciate, though I could not understand, she brought the sufferer back to consciousness. After the first bewilderment of surprise, Miss Allen fixed her eyes on me, with an expression I shall never forget, glanced at the paper from which she had been reading, shuddered, gasped, and, avoiding Jane's look of anxiety, and mine of inquiry, hurriedly left the room.

"Well," I muttered, as I resumed my pen, with nerves somewhat unsteady, "she has feeling, I perceive; so there is hope of her."

Perhaps the attack was the effect of sympathy; and the more I thought of it, the more I felt convinced that such was the case.

I knew nothing of her history. And yet, from her manners and appearance, I felt justified in supposing her the victim of a heart-sorrow that had crushed out the sweets of her existence.

I left home the next morning shortly after sunrise; for the trial came on early in the afternoon. As I passed through the garden, turning my eyes in the direction of the large elm-tree, which stood in one corner of the ground, I fancied I saw a gray-looking object. Miss Allen's dresses were of neutral tints, and it flashed across my mind that it was she, lying prone on the bench at the foot of the noble elm.

I went toward her; for I did not know how long she had been there, and common humanity required that I should have a little interest in her health. Nothing more, I assured myself. The noise of my coming aroused her, and she sat upright.

Her hair had fallen around her face and was damp with dew.

"Are you ill?" I inquired.

"Ill!" she said, pushing the hair from her white forehead, as though to bring back recollection. "Oh! no."

"You are in trouble, Miss Allen. If you do not care to give me your confidence, I hope you will, at least, consider me your friend."

She rose; her composure returned, her lips parted, but I heard no sound, and she looked, not at me, but far, far beyond. Though I knew this suppressed emotion was killing her, I felt I must not meddle with her grief; so, after giving her a few necessary orders, I left her. The memory of that white face, the calm, despairing look, haunted me during the days the trial continued.

The very features of the prisoner possessed for me a sort of fascination.

When the excitement seemed at its height, and the counsel, on either side, were about to crush the other by a weight of evidence too powerful to be resisted, there came a sudden pause, like the lull in a mighty tempest.

The prisoner was dead!

He had, with his own hand, defeated the ends of justice, and with an adroitness that had characterized every action of his life.

The trial was over. There was no longer any criminal in court; only a dead body! We had brought him before the bar where even-handed justice was supposed to preside; he had volun-

tarily sought a higher tribunal, and a Judge who "seeth not as man seeth." *

CHAPTER II.

I INVITED my friend, Dexter, home with me, for I wanted some one to talk with; I could talk to Miss Allen, but just now, after the excitement, I felt unequal to more than my share of conversation.

He was glad of the chance to breathe the fresh air, and, being excellent company, as well as a first-rate lawyer, I felt rather proud of the acquisition to my little circle.

"Well," said George, with a sigh of relief, during the evening of our return home, "I can't say I'm sorry Elworthy killed himself; I should have hated to have that man hung."

"What a wreck he was!" I responded. "With his talents properly applied he would have been an ornament to any society. How often we see men brought to the gallows by perverted genius!"

"Too true," said George; "and, having no particular fancy for such an elevated sphere, I shall remain a blockhead!"

I noticed how cheerful Miss Allen became after this trifling conversation. There was a perceptible flush in her cheek, and a color in her lips. I attributed it to the charm of Dexter's manner. He was full of life and animation; I was rather quiet and reserved by nature. The contrast was striking, and especially annoying to me.

Since that morning in the garden, I had felt a new interest in my housekeeper, which absence from her had rather increased than diminished. I was a little jealous that a stranger could exert over her such an influence. Dexter actually warmed her into life; gave her the society she needed, directed her taste for horticulture, and, during the week he remained, made her very happy, and me very miserable. I was glad when he took his departure; and was not surprised, but pained somewhat, when two days after, Miss Allen came to tell me she must resign her position in my household.

I could not question her concerning her resolve, I could not ask her to reconsider it; she was at liberty to act her own pleasure. I did ask her to give me a week's time to supply her place.

Supply her place! Just as we had become used to each other's ways. How provoking!

There shot through my heart the consciousness of how necessary she was to my existence. I felt too much interested in her to give her up

entirely; a sense of delicacy prevented my offering her increased wages, a sense of honor forbade my interfering with any of her plans. And yet to think that she must go! But I had a week's grace; seven whole days! and then—

Three days passed; most of which were spent at my office in town, with George Dexter as my frequent companion. On the afternoon of the fourth day, George dashed into my office, rather unceremoniously, his usual way, however, and, seating himself in the only vacant chair, blew clouds of fragrant smoke from a well colored "meerschaum."

I knew by the way he puffed that he had something to communicate. So I put myself in convenient attitude, by turning round and resting my elbows on the desk behind me, prepared to listen.

"You know, Dudley, that I took an unaccountable interest in that Elworthy who escaped us so nicely; I have been for some time trying to find out who he was, and where he came from. I tracked him after awhile, however, and imagine my surprise at ascertaining that he was once an influential citizen; and within a few years the owner and occupant of the very cottage in which you dwell."

"Singular coincidence!" I remarked.

"Rather," said George; "but, I further learned that he had but one daughter, a very attractive and finely educated young girl. Her father becoming more and more deeply involved in his nefarious schemes, and, fearful of being traced to his den, suddenly absconded. The property had been heavily mortgaged, and no interest paid to the holders. So the poor daughter was left without a home; and, in fact, without friends, for who would associate with the child of a fugitive from justice?"

"What has become of the girl? Did you find out that? The man's dead, so we can do nothing with him. It would be a charity to find the girl, and restore her to society. She may be in abject want."

"I have a suspicion of her whereabouts, not yet fully confirmed; I am waiting for you to invite me home with you."

"Come; and right welcome," I said, beginning to make preparations for an instant departure; "my old guardian is well acquainted in the village, and the barber, I am sure, is posted in all the ancient records."

"Indeed!" he sententiously remarked.

It was night when we arrived at the cottage; and Miss Allen, not anticipating my arrival, had retired early. There was not a light in any window. I opened the door, and we entered

noiselessly. Groping my way to the dining-room, I struck a match and lit the lamp. On the table stood Miss Allen's work-basket, into which George began immediately to poke, disarranging everything. I urged him to desist, it seemed a profanation. He paid no attention to my entreaties; merely remarking that he had a "taste for the useful," and continuing his objectless manipulations.

Presently I was started by the exclamation,

"By Jove! the very thing; proof positive."

"What is it, George? You've no right to meddle with such things."

"But I'm sure Providence directed my steps toward this identical work-basket. Look at this;" and he placed in my hand a small miniature set in gold.

"How familiar!" I started. "Elworthy, the forger!"

"And in her work-basket! Man alive! don't you see the resemblance? Miss Allen, your housekeeper——"

"Is Elworthy's daughter."

The mystery was solved. Poor thing! No wonder she was cold and reserved. The world had pointed its finger of scorn at her, and the sins of the father had been visited too cruelly on the child. My sympathy for her bade fair to stir up a warmer passion; and all that night I was devising plans for her comfort and assistance. I arose early, leaving George in an unmistakable state of somnolency and descended the stairs. I met Miss Allen at the door of the dining-room. She started at seeing me, and her face flushed—whether with surprise or joy, I could not tell.

"I have a few words to say to you, Miss Allen; will you oblige me?" and I led the way back into the room.

"You spoke of leaving me," I began, not without some trepidation, "and I had fully intended you should do so without being embarrassed by any questions from me; well knowing you must have good reasons for taking such a step."

She bent her head low over her hands.

"Yesterday I heard that which has induced me to urge you to prolong your stay in the house which was once your home, and which has been a shelter for you for the past few months."

She did not seem surprised that I knew her sorrow, but she covered her face with her hands, and the tears trickled through her fingers. They were the first I had ever seen her shed, and they softened my heart so that I could easily have wept with her.

She grew calm, but was still determined. "I

"must go," she said; "I could not resist leaving my hiding-place when I heard that a house-keeper was wanted. The old home had attractions for me. I had wandered about from one place to another, but some prying eye would discover me and bring my secret to the light. Here I was among friends; the trees, the flowers, the very walls were familiar. It has been an asylum for a wretched outcast; I have endeavored to do my duty—you have been very kind."

"Show me that you appreciate my kindness by continuing your duties as heretofore."

"It may not be," she said, sadly; "the dread of meeting one, whose existence has been a curse to me, is over. Those who reviled the living, will surely hold sacred the memory of the dead."

CHAPTER III.

THE leaves may be closely folded over the heart of the rose, but let the warm sunshine diffuse its regenerating influence, and lo! the change.

You will not suppose that, having felt the effect of love's delicious sunshine, I was willing to return to the loneliness of my former life, and without a sigh relinquish all my hopes of happiness.

No. Edith left me; and, though she had not deemed it necessary to let me know her whereabouts, she was often in my thoughts. "*Nihil desperandum*," was my motto, and I waited in hope.

The summer vacation was rapidly approaching, and I had made up my mind to visit the White Mountains, and revel in the enjoyment of all that was beautiful in nature. It is characteristic of me that whatever affects me most deeply is the subject least spoken of. Love, with me, was a solemn thing—a passion, deep, and enduring; so you will not wonder that I had no confidant in this "*affaire du cœur*." I think, from my very silence, George mistrusted how matters stood; but wisely kept his own counsel.

The day the sessions closed he came to my room, and, rather authoritatively, demanded that I should accompany him home. I was very tractable just then. I knew it would be much pleasanter for me to be in George's society, than wandering off alone in search of amusement or adventure. So I readily yielded acquiescence.

I have endeavored quite often to recall my first impressions on entering the town where George resided. I have a vague recollection of the place, and am confident his home was the abode of contentment and happiness.

After leaving the cars, we walked through a broad street, plentifully shaded with trees. Cottages stood back from the road; and court-yards, rich with the wealth of summer, diffused their fragrance and beauty to charm the passers by.

George and I sauntered along, enjoying all; the sunshine, the delicious air, the quiet, which could only be truly appreciated by those who, like us, sought and required mental relaxation.

The country was nothing new to us; but what we most enjoyed, was the prospect before us of perfect freedom of mind and body.

Presently we came to a row of cottages so exactly similar in every respect, that it was difficult to distinguish the dividing line between them.

As I walked along, taking in everything in a general way, my attention was attracted to a female form bending among the flowers in one of the gardens. As we came opposite to her she arose; and, dropping the gardening tool she had in her hand, stood transfixed.

It was Edith.

I was thoroughly bewildered; George looked innocently unconscious.

There was a gate, and a few feet of ground between Edith and myself; a moment's delay, and I was by her side. George leaned nonchalantly over the railing; not with the air of a Tantalus, however, but as one perfectly satisfied with the turn affairs had taken, and quite willing to be excluded from any participation therein. I began to be a little suspicious of him; though the idea of his having been an agent in working out my destiny, had never occurred to me before.

What I said to Edith matters not.

I learned from George that she was a companion for a widow lady in comfortable circumstances, and had all the comforts of a home. But there was a lingering trace of the shadow around her yet. Should I ever have power to dispel it!

I saw her frequently during my stay in the place; and I think she gave me more of her confidence than I had ever imagined she would. Under genial influences her nature was gradually expanding into a warmth and tenderness which had formerly seemed foreign to it. She was so impenetrable, however, that with all my astuteness I could not determine how I stood in her regard. I determined to make a bold stroke and so decide my fate.

"Give me the right to shelter and protect you," I urged, "the right of a husband, Edith. Is it too much?"

A thrill passed through her frame; a moment's

hesitation, and she raised her face to mine. George has claimed the honor of being first
There was a world of meaning in the glances groomsmen. So, by a hand which I trust
she gave me, though no word was spoken. My will never fail in kindness to her, I led my
hope would not prove a delusion! Edith from under the shadow of a great grief
out into the broad sunlight of love and happi-
ness.

I suspect that Mr. Lee anticipated this denouement from the first. He seems delighted
with the idea, and has promised to give the Nor do I care what the world will say if I
bride away. marry my housekeeper.

WHY SHE DID IT.

BY G. E. CHITTENDEN.

AUNT DOROTHY sat by the window, knitting. She sat up very straight, and her needles flew with marvelous rapidity.

"I hate to do it," she was thinking, "but I will. She's a dear girl, and I do believe all she needs is to have her eyes opened. Warning fingers aren't pleasant, I know, but I'll point them for once. There she comes now."

There was the sound of quick steps in the hall, the door opened, and a young girl ran into the room. She was very pretty, in a blonde way. Her friends called her Dotty, Dot, Fairy, and Fay, which airy nicknames suited her wonderfully well. Her name proper was Dorothy, so called for the erect lady by the window. Her blue eyes glanced quickly about the room, then she said:

"Do you know where mother is, auntie?"

"Now for it!" thought Aunt Dorothy, resolutely. "Why do you wish to know?" she asked.

"I want her to loop my dress, and to ask her to make this ribbon up into bows, for this evening. We're going to have such fun, auntie; there's to be a party at the Russels'. and what do you think?" with a little blush and brightening of the eyes. "I'm engaged for three dances already." She did not add that she expected to dance them all with the same partner.

"Hum—you are? Dorothy, can't you make ribbon into bows?"

"Not nearly so well as mother. Where is she, auntie? I must get this dress looped. I promised Sadie I'd run over and help her arrange the flowers."

"I believe," replied Aunt Dorothy, looking steadily into the girl's face, "that your mother is in the kitchen, ironing one of your dresses."

Her voice was peculiar, and Dorothy looked at her, slightly surprised.

"Yes," she answered, "my white muslin for this evening." Then something in her aunt's face made her add: "I'd have done it myself, you know, only I'm so hurried; and mother does those things much better than I."

Aunt Dorothy folded her knitting nervously together. Interfering with the affairs of others was very foreign to her nature, and she was at a loss how to proceed. Her only brother had been the love of her life; and, after his death,

his wife and children held the first place in her affection. Among them all, Dorothy was her favorite, and the effort she was making was, in a great measure, for the girl's own sake.

"Now's the time, if ever," she thought; "she's thinking a little. Dorothy," she said, "if you were obliged to deny yourself for someone—to work for and help that one—who would it be?"

Dorothy looked at her aunt in increased surprise. How stupid it was to be kept answering nonsensical questions, when every minute was precious! "The one I love best, I suppose," she returned, a little impatiently.

"And who is that?"

She answered, unhesitatingly: "Mother, of course."

Aunt Dorothy rose, and, taking a shawl from a chair near, pinned it over her shoulders.

"I must go," she said, "or I won't be in time to make biscuit; and young Frank Russel—he's studying law, you remember, with Mr. Ives, who lives next door to me—often stops in, on his way home, to have tea with me, and he likes my biscuit. Good-bye, my dear. So you would rather deny yourself, work for, and help your mother than anyone else? I am glad to hear it; for she needs it, if ever a woman did. You'll find her in the kitchen, ironing your dress, or, if that's done, getting tea, or maybe making pies. She said she could not find time for it Saturday, but hoped to this afternoon."

She paused, and, taking up her bonnet, put it on and tied the strings with careful precision. That done to her satisfaction, she turned and looked at Dorothy. There was a bright flush on the girl's fair little face, and her eyes were wide open and startled.

Aunt Dorothy was satisfied.

"Good-bye, my dear," she said again, her sharp voice grown suddenly gentle. "Come to see me when you can; I'm always pleased to have you." She kissed Dorothy hastily on the cheek, and, the next moment, was gone.

Dorothy went slowly toward the kitchen. The door was partly open, and she paused and looked in. Her mother stood by the table, ironing the last ruffle on the white muslin dress, which lay like a heap of snow before her. Dorothy gazed long and searchingly into the bending face. It was pale and thin; there were

tired lines about the patient mouth, and shadows under the sweet eyes. She worked steadily, but with a certain indescribable air of weariness. Surely, surely, she was more tired than usual. She did not always look like that. But why not? When did she ever rest? A quick pang shot through Dorothy's heart.

The slamming of the front door, and a confused murmur of voices, roused her. The children had come home from school.

"Mother! mother! Where are you, mother?" shouted Charlie.

"Mother, I've torn my coat. I want it mended right off, 'cause I—"

Gus was interrupted by Nellie: "Mamma, Gertie Forbes is going to have a picnic, and I want—"

"Mother! mother! mother! And mother would be ready, she knew, to satisfy every demand.

The hubbub of voices came nearer, and Dorothy escaped from the dining-room into the parlor, and closed the door. She threw herself on the sofa, and hid her face in her hands. She remained for a long time in the same position, and, when she looked up, her cheeks were wet with tears.

That evening, she went to the party. Squire Russel's place was the handsomest in the village. The beautiful garden was Dorothy's delight. She was sitting out there now, leaning back on a rustic garden-bench. Frank Russel, the partner of those three dances, was beside her. He was a good-looking wide-awake young fellow, who had no idea of spending an idle life just because his father happened to be a rich man.

He had started several subjects of conversation, but Dorothy's usual readiness seemed to have deserted her, and, monosyllabic answers not being encouraging, he had been silent for some time. Finally, he spoke in rather an aggrieved voice:

"I say, Dotty, why don't you speak to a fellow? Of course, 'yes' and 'no' are very good words in their way, but after a time they become monotonous; and now I'd be glad to hear you make some other remark—just for the sake of variety, you know."

Dorothy smiled absently and answered:

"Yes, Frank."

Frank groaned.

"There it is again!" he exclaimed. Then he added kindly: "Aren't you well, Dotty? Seems to me, you look white. Does anything trouble you? I wish you'd tell me what you're thinking about."

"I'm thinking about mother—and myself."

Frank," turning toward him and raising her eyes wistfully to his, "you always thought me rather a nice girl, didn't you, as girls go?"

"Rather—as girls go."

"Well, I'm not. I only found it out to-day: but," sitting erect with sudden energy, "I'm a cruel, wicked, selfish thing! Oh, Frank, I hate myself! I've been thinking, thinking, and I must speak out to someone. Mother is killing herself, working for us all; but it is not the children's fault: it is all mine. I am the oldest, and I should have thought." Her lips quivered, and two big tears rolled unheeded down her cheeks.

The expression in the brown eyes looking at her grew rather tender.

"I think," said Frank, slowly, "that, on the whole, I prefer cruel, wicked, selfish people to others."

Dorothy's smile was a failure.

"Dotty," he said, gently, "why do you feel so terribly about it? Your mother's all right, you know. And, if you want to help her, you can begin now—can't you?"

"Yes, indeed. I'm going to, at once."

"How?" with interest.

"Well, I think I'll do the cooking: that will be quite a weight off her mind. I'm going to get up early, to-morrow, and have breakfast ready when she comes down."

The next day, Dorothy opened her eyes to a new life. The room was filled with the gray morning-light. She dressed hurriedly, and, with stealthy step, descended to the kitchen. How cheerless the usually bright little room appeared!

"Patty can't be up yet," thought Dorothy. Patty was the fourteen-year-old maid-of-all-work. "I wonder if mother has to waken her, every morning?"

She passed through a small passage into a tiny room at the end, where Patty was sleeping the sleep of the just. Rousing her proved to be a work of time; but finally it was accomplished, and Dorothy returned to her labor.

"I'll leave the fire for Patty," she thought, "because of course she knows just how to build it. What shall I have for breakfast? Let me see—here's something in a covered dish. Oh! potatoes, cut up ready for frying: that will be easy. And eggs—I'll scramble them; the boys like them that way best."

Here Patty appeared, yawning and rubbing her eyes, which opened in round astonishment when they beheld Dorothy.

"I thinked missus looked kinder cur'us when she woke me up, this mornin'," she remarked.

"Now, build the fire, Patty," said Dorothy.

"Yes'm. Missus mostly does that, 'cause I wastes so much kindlin'."

"Builds the fire? Mother?"

"Yes, miss, she do; 'cause I—"

"Well, you build it, this morning—you can, I suppose. Now, let me see—you fry potatoes in butter, I think. I know just how to do that, for I've seen mother grease the griddle for griddle-cakes." Taking a small piece of butter, she rubbed it carefully over the surface of the griddle and deposited the potatoes thereupon, to have them ready. "And toast—I'll have toast. Patty, that fire's going well enough now. Where's the bread?"

Patty, walking backward, so as not to lose the slightest movement of Dorothy, whose proceeding she watched with the liveliest interest, brought the bread, which Dorothy proceeded to cut.

"That ain't no way to cut bread," remarked Patty: "you'd oughter turn the knife t'other way."

The blade, at that moment entering one of Dorothy's fingers, proved the truth of Patty's observation. But she was too much in earnest to be daunted by slight discouragement, and, presently, a small pile of uneven slices lay before her.

"They look horrid, that way—thick at one end and thin at the other," she thought, her cheeks beginning to grow rather hot; "but, if they're toasted nicely, maybe it won't matter. Now, Patty, get me something to cook the eggs in. We must hurry, or mother'll be down. Put the potatoes on, while I make the toast and break the eggs. Mercy! there goes some of the shell in. Why, they're beginning to cook already! Oh, they're burning! they're burning! Patty, bring me a spoon—quick—to stir them! But what makes the potatoes smoke so? Ought they to smoke?"

"No, they ortent. You didn't put enough grease in, nohow. Why don't missus get breakfast? Is she sick?"

"No. I'm always going to do the cooking, after— Oh, the toast is blazing! These eggs are stuck fast! The potatoes are burned! What shall I do?"

Mrs. Maynard awoke with a confused idea that the house was on fire. Yes, there certainly was smoke in the room. Springing out of bed, she hastily thrust her feet into slippers, and, throwing on a wrapper, ran into the hall. There, the smoke was more dense, and a strong odor of burning prevailed; and, surely, there were voices somewhere.

She paused an instant; then, going quickly downstairs, she threw open the kitchen-door. For a moment, the smoke blinded her; then she saw Patty running wildly about, flourishing a long iron spoon; and by the stove, with crimson cheeks, a cut on one hand, a burn on the back of the other, and spots of smut and grease all over the front of her pretty morning-dress, stood Dorothy, trying to lift a griddle, filled with some smoking mass, off the fire.

"Why, Dorothy!" cried her mother.

Dorothy dropped the griddle upon the floor with a crash, and, throwing herself into a chair, burst into tears of disappointment and discouragement.

Mrs. Maynard ran to her in alarm. "Dorothy, what is the matter?" she exclaimed. "What were you doing, child?"

"Oh, mother," she sobbed, "I'm a stupid, stupid goose! I thought I'd help you, and get breakfast; but I've only spoiled every single thing, and made a dreadful muss."

Mrs. Maynard laid her cool hand on the girl's hot forehead.

"Getting breakfast to help me, were you, dearie?" she said, with an irresistible smile, as she glanced at the ruin scattered about. "It was a kind thought; but one cannot learn to cook, all in a minute. Don't feel distressed—there's no harm done."

Dorothy took the comforting hand in hers, and pressed it lovingly against her burning cheek.

She left the cooking alone, after that. She found there were many other ways in which she could be a help and comfort.

"Mother," she said, one day, after she had for some time been watching her loosen the earth about some plants which stood in the parlor-window, "why don't you give up keeping flowers? They seem to me an unnecessary trouble."

"They don't seem so to me, dear," her mother answered, gently. "We cannot have our home elegant, but we can have it bright and homelike; and I think plants help very much."

"Yes," said Dorothy, "that is true. I would like to learn to take care of them, mother. Will you teach me?"

And so, gradually, the plants fell entirely under her charge, and thrived very well, too. She helped Patty with sweeping, dusting, and arranging the rooms; she attacked the ever-full mending-basket, and coaxed the children to allow her to explain difficult lessons. There were many drawbacks and discouragements, but "For mother's sake" was her watchword; and, as she watched the dear face day by day, she

rejoiced to see the weary look gradually disappear, and the shadows under the eyes grow less apparent.

Nellie, who in her heart considered her elder sister perfection, was quick to follow her example; and the boys, almost unconsciously, grew to be more heedful of mother's comfort.

Mrs. Maynard wondered at the change. She found the loving care of her eldest daughter very sweet, and grew to depend on her more and more. Her mother-eyes saw quickly when Dorothy was tired, and she insisted on her going out, as usual, in the afternoon. Dorothy always went, and came home bright and full of fun.

So the weeks and months passed away. On looking back, Dorothy wondered where the time had flown. She thought this last summer had been the happiest she had ever known.

One morning, on entering the dining-room, Mrs. Maynard was greeted with a chorus of:

"Happy birthday, mother!"

"Mother, did you forget it is your birthday?"

"See what I have for you, mamma; and I made it all myself."

"Mother," said Dorothy, as soon as she could be heard, "auntie was here yesterday, when you were out, and she wants us to celebrate your birthday by taking dinner with her."

"That's all right," remarked Charlie, "auntie's dinners are not to be despised. Good thing it's Saturday, so we can all go."

"Yes, that's what she said," continued Dorothy. "I'm going over, this morning, mother. Auntie wants me to arrange some flowers for the table. I thought I'd go early; for there might be other little things I could do."

"Miss Maynard," said Frank Russel, coming into the spinster's parlor a little before two o'clock that afternoon, "mother, father, and Sadie have gone to the city to-day, and I want to have dinner with you. May I?"

"Certainly," answered Aunt Dorothy, with whom the young man was a great favorite. She looked up with a twinkle in her eyes as she said it, and they both laughed.

"There they come now," said Frank, going to the window, "and Dotty—bless her—is running out to meet them."

"Dinner is ready," announced Aunt Dorothy, as soon as wraps were removed and kissing and handshaking over.

Aunt Dorothy's dinners were always a pleasure, for she had a genius for cooking, and to-day everything seemed exceptionally good.

"Well," remarked Charlie, leaning back and sipping his coffee—dinner being a thing of the

past—"I think we all owe you a vote of thanks, auntie, for what, without exaggeration, may be called a tiptop dinner."

"Hear! hear!" murmured Frank.

"Yes, auntie, it was splendid, 'specially the pudding," said Nellie.

"The pie, I say," put in Gus.

Mrs. Maynard laughingly shook her head at the children. "Auntie is very kind," she said.

"Well," observed Aunt Dorothy, complacently, "thanks are always agreeable, of course. I'm glad you all enjoyed your dinner, only—I did not cook it."

"What?"

"Who did?"

"It cooked itself, I suppose."

"Why, what do you mean?"

They all spoke but Dorothy and Frank. Her cheeks were flushed, and her dancing eyes were hidden by their long lashes. His eyes were on her face, and their expression was half laughing and wholly tender.

"I mean just what I say," answered Aunt Dorothy, with quiet enjoyment; "I did not cook the dinner we have just eaten—no, nor did I help one mite. If you want to know who did make everything, from soup to dessert, look around the table, and see if you can guess."

They all obeyed, and each pair of eyes stopped at the young girl's telltale face.

"Dorothy?" asked Charlie, doubtfully.

"Yes—Dorothy," answered Aunt Dorothy; "she's been learning since midsummer. 'Most every afternoon she's been here, and I've taught her how to cook; and I'm not ashamed of my pupil, either."

They were silent for a moment from surprise, then Gus cried out:

"Well, if that don't beat everything! Whatever made you think of it, Dot?"

Dorothy, whose place was beside her mother, slipped her hand into hers, whispering:

"I can help you get breakfast now, mother dear."

"My child!" she exclaimed, her voice a little tremulous. "And I thought you were resting and enjoying yourself of an afternoon."

"So I was," Dorothy answered, with a sudden laugh; "I never had more fun in my life. Auntie's the one to be pitied."

"Nobody praises me," said Frank, in an abused voice. "I knew about it all the time, and helped like a good fellow. Dottie did not want me in the kitchen at first—said she would not have me at any price; but I'm not easily put down, and she soon found that, for beating eggs, grinding spices, and such like necessary

and useful employment, there are not many my equals. Eh, Dotty?"

Dorothy smiled up at him and blushed prettily, but did not speak.

"Didn't you long to tell?" demanded Nellie, finding voice at last.

"Yes, I did; but I wanted to wait till I had something worth telling; and then, auntie thought it would be a nice surprise for mother's birthday."

"But why did you do it?" repeated Gus, whose curiosity was not yet satisfied.

Aunt Dorothy answered: "For what seems to me a most excellent reason; she did it for her mother's sake."

Mrs. Maynard pressed the little hand that rested in hers; Gus looked at Dorothy with a new respect; Nellie regarded her with a species of awe; and there was a suspicious gleam in Charlie's eyes as he rose to his feet.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, in true oratorical style, "I wish to propose a toast, which we will drink in this delicious coffee—it may, perhaps, be a trifle cold by now, but no matter. I drink to my accomplished sister Dotty—let us be respectful on this auspicious occasion—Dorothy—and I wish to state that I solemnly

promise to show, by assisting at the rapid disappearance thereof, that whatever good things she may choose to concoct—isn't that the word?—will be thoroughly appreciated by one member of her family, at least. Good cooking, ladies and gentlemen, adds much to the happiness of man, not to mention boy, for:

'We may live without poetry, music, and art;
We may live without conscience, and live without heart;
We may live without friends; we may live without books;
But civilized man cannot live without cooks.'

So three cheers for Dorothy, the best little keeper of a secret in Christendom, and the queen of cooks. Long may she reign! And, amid a laughing chorus of "Hear! hear!" and a clapping of hands, Charlie sat down, well satisfied with the effect of his maiden speech.

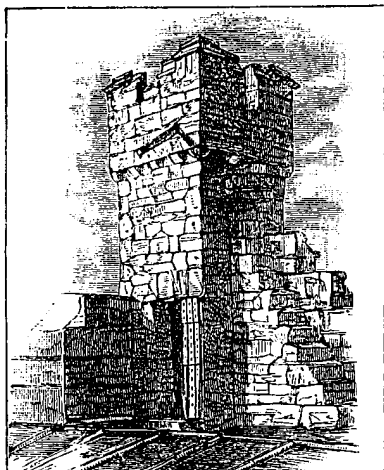
That evening, as he walked home with her in the starlight, Frank asked Dorothy a question.

"Yes," she answered, clasping both hands about his arm in a pretty caressing way, "some day; but not for a long time, Frank. Mother"—with a happy smile—"would miss me now, you know. So we will wait; won't we, dear?"

"How good you are!" he exclaimed, kissing the little face upraised to his. "Yes, I can wait, my darling, now I know you are mine."

THE STORY OF DOROTHY VERNON.

BY GARRETT FOSTER.



THE PEVERIL TOWER.

D

ERBYSHIRE is undoubtedly one of the most picturesque districts in all England, and poets, novelists, and travelers have never wearied of chronicling its beauties.

The hills are not nearly so lofty as those of Scotland or Wales, but they are so effectively grouped, with such exquisite valleys and noble stretches of woodland in between, that the landscape fairly challenges comparison with the finest scenery of either country. The Derwent is the principal river; but several smaller streams nearly equal in loveliness flow through it, among them the Dove and "the gentle Wye," that Wordsworth loved.

Beside these natural advantages, it is marvelously rich in relics of ancient days, dating back to Roman rule, and preserving the record of the successive sway of Briton, Saxon, and Norman. The whole shire is literally crowded with ruined

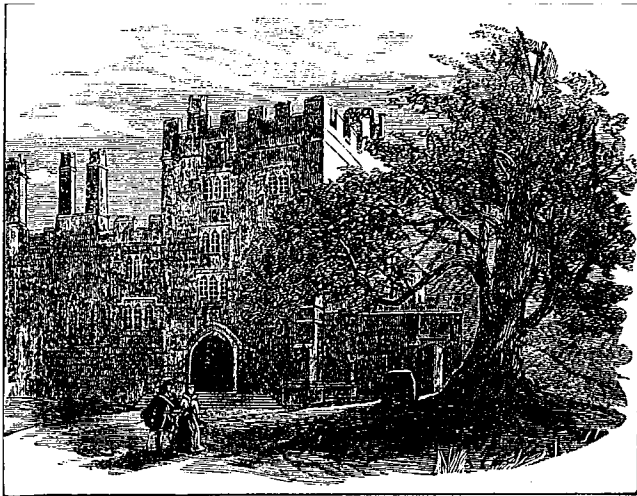
abbeys, storied keeps, and the very stateliest of Albion's ancestral castles and manors, about which cluster so many historic and romantic memories as to make them shrines for the traveler.

Among these places of interest, Haddon Hall stands pre-eminent. It is indeed one of the finest castellated mansions which England can boast; and certain portions, the beautiful chapel and banqueting-hall among them, belong to a much older era. It has been untouched by alterations to suit modern ideas of comfort, and, though long uninhabited, is kept in a state of perfect preservation. On entering its walls, the visitor is carried back to medieval days; the illusion is so perfect, that he expects to see steel-clad knights jousting in the courtyard, stately dames in farthingale and ruff sauntering about the gardens to meet a gay train, hawk on wrist, issuing from the portals, bent on one of the chief pleasures of cavaliers and ladies in the olden time—or, best of all, in wandering about the pleasance or through the forest, to encounter fair Dorothy Vernon herself.

To every reader of ancient chronicles, the name recalls a page from the old, old story which is always new, and the associations connected with the beautiful Dorothy form one of the principal charms of a pilgrimage to Haddon, investing the venerable pile with that human interest which only love and romance can bestow.

The place to-day must look very much as it did when Dorothy lived, dreamed, and suffered there. The main portion of the building, ancient as are certain landmarks, dates back only to the reign of Edward the Fourth—and, by then, noblemen had ceased to dwell in fortresses—so Haddon possesses no claims to be other than a baronial residence: though it was capable of being put in a state of defense, as is proved by its noble tower, called the "Eagle" or "Peveril," of which any castle might be proud.

Passing through the massive gateway and ascending a flight of steps into the outer court, one perceives a second; for the great mass of masonry surrounds two quadrangles. The gardens spread to the right; the lower is roughly terraced, and stretches down to the foot of the hill, where a flight of sixtyseven steps—I once counted them—leads to the river Wye. An immense square lawn is overlooked by the terrace that is one of Haddon's

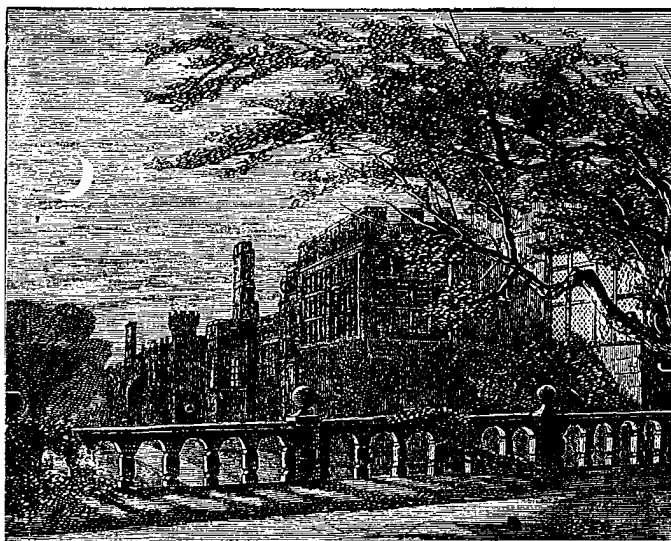


HADDON HALL.

chief glories, the view from which is of a loveliness not soon to be forgotten. The winter-garden is planted with trees strangely gnarled and twisted by the winds of centuries; and, at the north end, overhung by a noble yew, is that most romantic feature—Dorothy Vernon's door, with the balustraded steps leading from it—and,

nearly opposite, a second lofty terrace, called "Dorothy's Walk."

The slope on which the mansion stands is so abrupt, that many of the ground-floor rooms at the back are on a level with those of the front second-story; and the very names of the apartments through which one is shown sound like



THE GRAND TERRACE.

the titles of old romances—the King's Room, the Orange Parlor, the Minstrels' Gallery, Lady Catherine's Tiring-Room, Dorothy's Bower, and the like. The Blue Drawing-Room and the Banqueting-Hall are magnificent chambers, hung with Gobelin tapestry, and tradition declares that the floor of the great ball-room—over a hundred feet in length—is the product of a single oak which grew in Haddon Forest. Room after room is crossed, each more interesting than another, till the pilgrim's visit ends with an inspection

a sobriquet derived from the name of the highest mountain of the district. No human being can avoid crosses, and the extravagant baronet held the fact of possessing no male heir the chief of his, though the beauty and grace of the co-heiresses, his daughters Margaret and Dorothy, ought to have consoled a reasonable man for that lack.

Of the two, the younger—Dorothy—was much the more beautiful and gifted, and the tale of her girlhood more replete with romantic incident;

indeed, Margaret's was a staid satisfactory career, free from strong emotions of any sort. She was only nineteen when, with the full approval of all her relatives, she became engaged to, Sir Thomas Stanley, the son of the Earl of Derby—and was, in consequence, as an old chronicler expresses it, "petted and made much of"; while the charming Dorothy, then probably about seventeen, was already under a cloud at home—kept in the background, and made to suffer the displeasure of her parents—no light misfortune in those days of rigid discipline and autocratic authority on the part of heads of households.

Poor Dorothy had already met her fate. she had fallen in love with a man whom her family would not tolerate. The hero of her romance



DOROTHY VERNON'S WINDOW.

of the Gothic chapel. The consecrated spot is a marvel of lovely carvings, and the walls still preserve the frescoes which were fresh and bright when Dorothy Vernon's eyes rested thereon.

And this was Dorothy's story:

In the fourteenth century, Haddon passed from the original owners into the hands of the Vernons by the marriage of one of the latter race with an heiress of the Avenell family; and, in 1515, Sir George Vernon ruled there—known from his magnificent style of living and his lavish hospitality as the King of the Peak,

mance was John Manners, second son of the Earl of Rutland. As there was nothing in his character or life to render him personally objectionable, and since in point of birth a man who had Edward the Fourth's blood in his veins was at least fully equal in rank to the Vernons, only a family feud can account for the determined opposition which Dorothy's parents offered to his suit.

The story goes that the young girl first met Manners and was attracted toward him before she knew his name, so that she might have sighed with Juliet:



DOROTHY VERNON'S DOOR.

"Too early seen, and known too late,
My only love sprung from my only hate."

It is even asserted that, like Juliet, she encountered her hero at a masquerade; in her case, an entertainment given by some magnate of the shire on the occasion of a royal progress. Dorothy was allowed to go to the ball; and there John Manners, who had been brought up in a distant portion of England or on the Continent, made his first appearance in the society of the county.

The secret of the youthful pair was speedily discovered; and, though too far along in the centuries for hot-blooded male cousins to behave as the Capulets would have done toward Romeo had they caught him, at least the family could exercise a privilege not wholly lost to families even in this day—that of tormenting the poor heroine, who remained steadfast to her love and was not to be moved either by persuasions or threats. Father, stepmother, and sister alike opposed her heart's-desire, and she was closely watched—in fact, kept almost a prisoner. One would think that her own happy love-affair might have inclined Mistress Margaret to sympathize with the poor girl; but such was not

the case. Perhaps Stanley did not fancy young Manners, or it may be that she could not forgive "little Dolly" for being more beautiful than her own fair self.

Several months passed; the time set for Margaret's marriage drew near, and great were the preparations for that event. The house was full of guests for weeks in advance, and each day offered a gala fine enough to have satisfied most people of that era for the display requisite at the bridal festivities.

Dorothy was permitted more freedom. It would have been difficult to invent excuses for not letting her appear; and, besides, she had borne her privations so patiently that, very probably, the elders believed her girlish fancy had begun to yield to the mingled effects of separation from her Romeo and the penalties incurred by rebellion against parental authority.

One day, the sisters, with a party of visitors, were walking in the forest, Dorothy lingering a little behind the others, perhaps to indulge her melancholy thoughts in comparative solitude. Descending a slope, she slipped on a bank of moss; there were numbers of woodcutters and foresters scattered about, and one of these latter

had, unnoticed, been for some moments hovering about, and was leaning against a tree close by when Dorothy met with her mishap.

He started forward and assisted her to rise; she caught sight of his face and uttered one little cry. The handsome forester retreated, and had disappeared behind a thicket before Dorothy's companions could reach her. By the time they got to her side, she had recovered her presence of mind and explained that the fall had startled her. She was not hurt, however—not in the least, she assured them, with gay smiles and a sudden access of color: for, hidden under the lace of her bodice, close to her swiftly beating heart, Dorothy carried a precious treasure.

No wonder that the guests marveled at her beauty; no wonder that Margaret could report to their parents that Dolly had found fresh spirits—had certainly learned reason from the discipline she had undergone, or was perhaps specially pleased with some one of the new cavaliers. And, at that very moment, Dorothy, safe in her room, was able to regard the treasure which had wrought so mighty a change in so brief a space—a note which her lover had slipped into her hand.

After this, the youthful pair contrived often to meet. Secure in his disguise, Manners haunted the neighborhood, and even ventured into the courtyards and gardens of the hall. In the chamber called the Earl's anteroom is a window from whence, it is said, fair Dorothy used to watch for her lover's coming and exchange signals with him, as he stood in the court below. Often, after nightfall, she managed to steal through the outer apartments till she came to "Dorothy Vernon's door," and so down the balustraded steps and on to the upper terrace—Dorothy's Walk—one of the loveliest and most secluded lovers'-nooks that can be imagined.

The days glided by; the magnificent festivities began in honor of Margaret's marriage, and Dorothy was so happy and gay that, though never a favorite, both haughty father and cold-hearted stepmother released her from the ban of their displeasure, and, seeing the admiration she roused on every side, regarded her with a favor they had never shown

before, beginning to speculate on some brilliant match for her which would reflect due credit on their house.

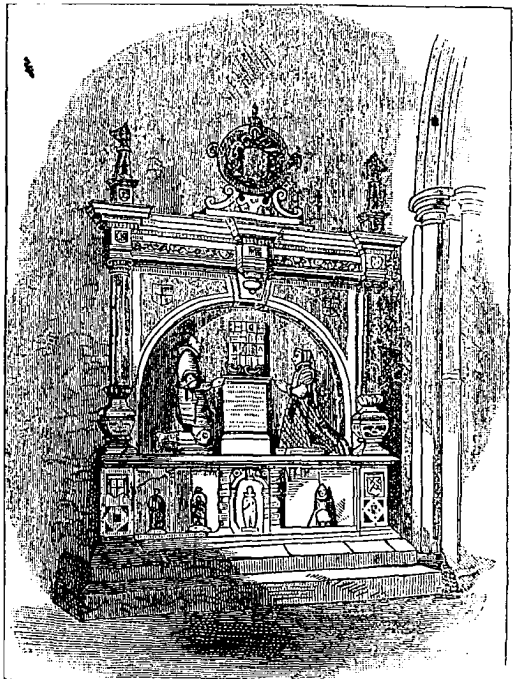
One evening, the ball-room was illuminated for the last of the revels which were to precede the wedding, and, among all the high-born dames, the future bridesmaid was the loveliest and the most courted.

"It is a night with never a star,
And the hall with revelry throbs and gleams;
There grates a hinge—the door is ajar,
And a shaft of light in the darkness gleams.

"A faint sweet face, a glimmering gem,
And then two figures steal into light;
A flash, and darkness has swallowed them—
So sudden was Dorothy Vernon's flight."

Dorothy escaped from the ball-room, and, before her absence had occasioned remark or been noticed by her guardians, she had fled across the chamber from whose window she used to watch for her lover—on through the anterooms to the great door, and down the balustraded stairs once again.

Her knight was waiting in the shadow of the trees beyond, and he bore her swiftly up the



THE MONUMENT.

steps to "Dorothy's Walk," at the end of which his horses and trusty servant were stationed.

Away they galloped, through forest and across fields, till they reached the high-road, miles distant; and, by the time Dorothy's flight became a certainty, they were near the boundary of the adjacent county, which they reached in safety, and were married.

Whether the family became reconciled, or whether Sir George was unable to disinherit his daughter, is not told; but, at all events, on his death, Dorothy inherited her girlhood's home for her portion. So Haddon passed into the hands of the Rutlands—since the beginning of the last century a ducal family—and, for nearly fifty years after, the fine old hall was a favorite residence.

Dorothy and her husband lived long together, and she bore him three noble sons and one fair daughter. The old traditions of the neighborhood still keep fresh the memory of their happiness, for their love proved no youthful dream which was to fade, leaving a dreary waking behind, but culminated in that sweetest of human

blessings—wedded bliss which grew more complete as time went on.

Sir John—he was knighted late in life—outlived his wife by many years, but her memory remained the most precious thing this world held for him. He was laid to rest at last by her side in the beautiful church near Haddon. Their monument stands at the southern extremity—a massive stately structure, surmounted by a shield and obelisk bearing the arms of their respective families, while, beneath, two kneeling figures face each other.

Extensive restorations were undertaken in the church in 1847, and it became necessary to make an excavation under the monument. The leaden coffins were opened, and, though the bodies had crumbled so that only dust and bones were left, the auburn hair, which had been one of Dorothy's chief beauties, remained bright and soft as in life, and among the thick tresses gleamed the jeweled pins with which she always fastened them—gifts from the lover-husband of her youth and later years.

A COMPLETE CURE.

BY FRANK LEE BENEDICT.

I WAS preparing to leave Paris for Nice, proposing to spend the winter there, as I had done for several seasons in succession, finding the climate admirably suited to my invalid aches and habits.

A few days before my proposed departure, I received a letter from a widowed sister in New York, and, owing to carelessness somewhere, the missive had been considerably delayed. She wrote in a very excited manner about what she called "an unfortunate entanglement" into which her only son had slipped; and I was greatly surprised when I found that her fine phrase meant that the boy wanted to get married, and that she objected to his choice from mere worldly reasons, which appeared to me trivial and contemptible.

Americans seem to have become sadly Europeanized since I grew up! In my young days, a fellow married the girl of his choice—if she and hers were respectable—without opposition from anybody, and money would have been the last thing he thought about, expecting to support his own wife as one of the natural duties of man.

But here was my sister declaring that her son must not follow his own inclination—must forget the girl he loved—simply because she was a poor school-teacher, and wed a fortune equal to his own and a social position to match.

"I shall send Clarence to you at once, to spend the winter," she wrote, "in the hope that he will meet, in Paris or Nice, some brilliant American girl who will make him speedily forget the passing fancy which has so sorely disquieted me: a man can make no social mistake so terrible as that of marrying beneath him."

Confound the woman! Had she forgotten that, less than thirty years ago, when she was Jane Hardwick, she taught music, and I was a poor clerk in a lawyer's office? I made a fortune and she married one; but I had no idea that, during our long years of separation, she had grown such an outrageous snob.

I was groaning and anathematizing over her letter, when I heard a tremendous racket in the antechamber as of heavy luggage being deposited on the floor, and then my old servant's voice in eager expostulation.

"A thousand pardons, monsieur," said Antoine,

softly opening the door; "there is a young gentleman who insists on entering, though I have assured him that monsieur is invisible."

"Such nonsense, Uncle Richard—with you there as large as life and twice as natural!" called a gay young voice from behind the hangings: and a great fellow, with wide blue eyes and closely-cropped auburn hair, rushed into the room and shook both my hands till the breakfast-tray on the table before me rattled and the cup and plates danced a jig.

"Bless me!" said I, "what a high-wind of a nephew! I suppose you are my nephew—Clare or Clara—or whatever sweet maidenly name your mother elects to give you."

"Now, that's shabby," quoth he, laughing. "The mater will call me 'Clarence'; but, to everybody else, I'm 'Dick Godwin'—including you, Uncle Richard, if you please. And now, since you are so very pressing—thanks, I think I will take a cup of coffee and some of that Strasburg pie: for I had a beastly breakfast at the station, and am as hungry as a hunter."

The boy's manner pleased me. In ten minutes, Antoine brought him a comfortable meal, and we were chatting as cordially as possible, though I had not seen him since he was a little chap in knickerbockers; and, before the day ended, we were the best friends possible, and, luckily, old Antoine took a fancy to the handsome fellow and declared that his French was worthy of a Parisian.

I deferred my journey for a fortnight, and actually went about showing my nephew "the sights," and found him much better up in historical and general knowledge than I had ventured to hope, knowing how his mother had petted and indulged him.

Not one word did he say, not a single allusion did he make to that "unfortunate entanglement" which had led to his expatriation, though I gave him every opportunity so to do; and, finally, I made up my mind either that the love-wounds of a man of two-and-twenty were easily healed, else that the whole thing had been a plot on his part to induce his mother to let him come abroad.

In due time, we reached Nice, the most harmonious companions imaginable, and, after introducing him into the best "society set"—

as I suppose my sister would have expressed it—I left him free.

One day, a Polish lady—old Madame Kisaleff—invited a select party to hear her read an original comedy; and I could not refuse to go.

The little comedy was so clever that I forgot Dick till I chanced, at the close of the third act, to see him come out of the conservatory with an odd-looking woman, and, when I got a chance to ask him who she was, he surprised me by growing quite red, evidently vexed by my question.

“Have you forgotten Madame de la Croix?” he asked.

“I am shocked at my own remissness, but I must confess that I have,” said I. “Where did I ever meet her?”

“The first time was on the American flagship, when the squadron was lying at Villafranca,” rejoined Dick

“Oh, yes—now I remember—a daughter too, was there not?”

“Yes,” he answered, shortly, growing still redder.

It had been on the tip of my tongue to add: “A queer lot,” but I repressed the remark.

I gathered from old friends that lovely Mademoiselle de la Croix had been such for a goodly number of seasons—in fact, could not be a day under twentyseven, though wonderfully beautiful still and singularly youthful in appearance. I learned that she might have married advantageously several times, only that no prospective son-in-law would hear of the mother's remaining near her daughter; for, though keeping a certain position through her name and her relatives, energetic people did not hesitate to pronounce the countess “a regular sharper.”

Before long, it came to my ears that sympathizing people were saying outright that it was plain my nephew meant to marry the fascinating Gabrielle, and to add that it was a huge pity.

The short winter was passing—strangers were beginning to think of leaving Nice—and I ventured to suggest to Dick a brief trip among the Pyrenees before returning north. Then the youth found his tongue, and boldly announced to me that he proposed to marry Mademoiselle de la Croix without loss of time, and desired me to write and broach the subject to his mother.

That evening, I called on Madame de la Croix, and my request for a private interview was granted, though I fancy the daughter assisted thereat, snugly ensconced within a curtained recess at the further end of the little drawing-room.

After a fine display of mutual mendacity about the pleasure of meeting, and a brief talk about the doings in our small world of Nice, the

countess smilingly declared that she was certain my amiable visit was due to some especially happy reason, and then we speedily engaged in a polite duel of words as sharp and polished as two Damascus blades.

I told her how much honored I should feel by the proposed alliance, but could not conceal from her tender maternal heart my fear—I might say certainty—of my sister's deep-rooted prejudice against her son's taking a foreign wife, as well as of her desire to see him reach years of discretion before he should think of taking one at all.

“But she will never be able to resist the strength of this grand passion—this first outburst of a noble heart—so fully shared, too, by his beautiful betrothed!” cried madame, enthusiastically.

“Alas, madame,” said I, with deep pathos, “the boy was sent to me a few months ago, to find a cure for an equally absorbing passion—you see how speedily he has found it.”

Tableau of surprise on madame's part, and an indignant rustle among the curtains of the alcove!

“Our dear Richard, however, is his mother's only son—and has, too, an independent fortune, I think,” the countess soon recovered sufficiently to make answer, and now the alcove-curtains fell in stiff folds suggestive of eager listening.

“An only child,” I amended, “but her husband's will left my sister complete mistress of his fortune—which, after all, is not so very large. She is a determined woman and young enough to marry again, if her son should oppose her.”

“We can only rely on Richard's faithfulness and your kindly aid,” said madame, coaxingly. “Surely you will help the dear children to be happy—you will do your very best?”

“I promise that faithfully,” I rejoined, as I bent over the hand extended; but it occurred to me that our ideas as to what was best might materially differ.

Of course I wrote to my sister without delay.

“I can see you are opposed to my marriage, uncle,” Dick said, frankly; “but that is because you don't know my Gabrielle! Her mother is a woman of the world, but she is an angel of innocence! I hate madame sometimes—I can never see Gabrielle alone—she forces her to go out, evening after evening—I am never allowed more than one dance—oh, it's maddening!”

So madame was playing social propriety, to drive my boy still more insane, and I should alienate his affection if I tried to open his eyes to the reputation of both mother and daughter.

My sister's letters reached us in due season.

her refusal was not only decisive, but somewhat impolite. After that, for nearly a fortnight, I saw very little of Dick, and at last, one day, a friend said to me:

"Isn't your nephew playing rather heavily?"

I made some vague reply, and, when I got home, asked my old valet what was going on.

For answer, Antoine placed in my hand a copy of the *Nice Journal*, and I read that, the day before, one of the roulette-tables had been closed at three in the afternoon, owing to the great gain of a lucky young American. I knew that closing the table meant the maximum of loss allowed for one table in a single day.

I went to Dick's room and waited there till he came in to dress for dinner. He looked worn and tired, but was in high spirits, and gave me a warm greeting. I showed him the newspaper, and asked if he were the lucky player.

"Yes, Uncle Richard," he replied, unhesitatingly. "You see, fortune favors the daring. My mother will not hear reason, and the countess will not give me Gabrielle unless I have at least a competency. The tables are just wonderful; every number I choose comes up invariably! I hate play, and shall stop short just as soon as I reach the exact sum Madame de la Croix declares necessary. You would never believe how rich I am already," he added, laughing excitedly. "I am obliged to pretend to put my gains in the bank, but that old trunk is my safe. My father used it in his business-days."

He took a queer-shaped key out of his purse, and unlocked the great trunk; then, with another still odder little instrument, opened the inner casing of the box and displayed a number of French bank-notes of the highest denominations.

"How much?" I asked.

"Nearly three hundred thousand francs, and I've not been over a dozen times in all. Think of it—almost sixty thousand dollars!"

"Dear boy, aren't you a little mad with all this excitement and anxiety? Would your father have approved?" I questioned. Then I stopped, remembering that his father ought to have had Dick study a profession, learn business, else to have left him means of support independent of his mother's caprices or prejudices.

"It doesn't seem right. I feel that, Uncle Richard," he replied, with one arm on my shoulder. "But I can't live without Gabrielle, and there is no other way for me to win her. If I delay, her mother will force her to marry some rich man. There are several ready."

"But suppose you lose, next time"

"Well, well, then my hopes must go! Don't reason with me; don't ask me to give her up. It maddens me!"

I am not a Solon, but I do know that expostulation with a young man in that state of mind is sure to drive him desperate. I let my nephew alone.

Three days passed, and then, at the unholy hour of one in the morning, when Antoine was trying to read me to sleep, we were disturbed by the abrupt entrance of Dick into my bed-chamber. First, he hugged me till I was breathless, then he performed a war-dance about my prostrate form, in order to celebrate his marvelous good-fortune and his last—"his very last"—visit to the gaming-tables.

The maximum gain at one time—five hundred thousand francs—was his! I could scarcely believe my ears at first. When I did, I felt sure that the lad's future was wrecked. How could he resist the spell of the fatal board, after this? I did not preach or argue. I tried to keep him all night, but he had friends waiting—he must rejoin them.

"I shall leave this little pile with you, Uncle Richard," he said, drawing out the great wallet stuffed with bank-notes. "Nobody will suspect that it is here, and I shall feel perfectly safe."

Antoine, who, of course, had assisted at the conference, counted the bank-notes aloud, agreed to take charge of it for the night, and Dick went off to his companions. Antoine and I exchanged our forebodings that this wonderful luck would, in some way, cause the boy's ruin. Then my faithful servant left me.

I slept very late, the next morning; and, when I rang for Antoine, a servant appeared, to say that my valet had gone out. While I was taking my belated coffee, Dick rushed in, literally wild with delight. He had already seen his fair Gabrielle, and communicated the wonderful news. For some reason, she and her mother had not been at Monaco on the previous night. He had found the mother most gracious and accommodating. She had consented to accompany Gabrielle to Switzerland, where the marriage could take place legally without the formality of my sister's consent.

"She judges my mother by herself, and is confident that, in time, we shall be forgiven, and I believe so, too," cried Dick, joyously.

"And what investment do you propose to make of your money?" I asked.

"Oh, the countess has offered to arrange all that. She knows some of the most prominent financiers of Paris," said Dick. "And there must be no delay. I can tell you the whole

truth, uncle. Gabrielle is afraid, if we wait, that her mother may withdraw her consent. There's some new awfully rich fellow on hand!"

Good heavens! Was I ever so young and innocent?

"I'll ring for Antoine," pursued Dick, "and get my valuable wallet—I must deposit it at Le Seur's banks."

In his energy, he nearly pulled the bell-rope down, and several servants obeyed the summons in hot haste, but could only say that Antoine had not yet returned.

"Very odd, he should go out so early and not be back yet," said I.

"But what did he do with the cash, uncle?" questioned Dick.

"Why, he took it to his chamber, you know—"

Dick was gone before I could finish my sentence. Ten minutes later, he stood again in my room, as pale a man as ever I looked at, and flung himself into a chair.

"What is it, Dick? What is the matter?" I cried. "Has anything happened to Antoine? He's not been well, lately—"

"He is gone!" Dick broke in, with a gasp.

"Where? What?"

"Decamped—this faithful fellow, this pearl of servants—and taken my money with him," Dick continued, with a dreadful little laugh. "If the countess will only wait—oh, I may win my Gabrielle yet!"

Then he hid his face in his hands and groaned, and I inelegantly blew my nose in sympathy. Then such a busy morning as we spent! The police proved itself as inefficient as it always does, at an emergency, in every country; and all we succeeded in doing was to waste no end of money in telegrams and messengers. Well, the robber—I may as well tell it here—was at last traced to Genoa: he had there taken ship for Buenos Ayres, which charitable country does not extradite swindlers or robbers. Nothing so quickly planned was ever more neatly accomplished than this evasion; and, between sorrow for Dick and annoyance at the loss of an invaluable servant, I was in the depths of distress.

Dick went to see the countess, but evidently met with slight consolation: for he returned broken and depressed.

"I suppose she is wise; to look out for our mutual welfare," he said; "but it is tough that she won't let me see and console Gabrielle. She'll cry her beautiful eyes out, I know."

"What are you going to do, my boy?" I asked.

"Go back to Monte Carlo, to-morrow, and try over again," said he, sadly; "though it is

hardly possible that my great luck should repeat itself. I tried to make the countess content with the sum still left; but she says that, much as she loves us both and longs to see us happy, she cannot consent to any imprudence. I suppose she is right; but it's very hard."

Persuasions were useless—the next day, he went off to Monaco. The afternoon was heavenly; all the world was driving along the seashore, and I drove there too: and whom should I see but Madame de la Croix and the fair Gabrielle perched on the mail-coach of a Brazilian who had lately been astonishing Nice by his lavish expenditure. At the spot where all the carriages halted to hear music from a good band, I got out, meaning to go and salute the two ladies, but was stopped by my old friend Jarvis, who had reached town the night before.

"Anyone new and exciting here?" he asked, after a little talk.

"No—unless it is those two ladies yonder," said I, pointing out the countess and her daughter.

"New? They?" cried Jarvis. "Why, it is fully ten years since the Benjamin business—the girl was just seventeen then—and there have been several affairs since, though none in which she showed her hand so plainly."

Here was a "find" for me, if Jarvis knew what he was talking about! He was in a hurry, then, to join some friends; but I made him promise to dine with me, that evening, and he arrived punctually at half-past seven.

We had just begun our soup, when a dispatch was brought in to me. It was from Dick, and contained these words:

"Telegraph Smith to give me five thousand francs."

He had already lost his sixty thousand dollars, I thought, and wanted to tempt fate with a thousand more. Well, if he lost that, he might be cured of play, and of another infatuation into the bargain. I telegraphed the money, and these lines to himself: "Join me at dessert, at ten o'clock."

Anxious as I was, my old acquaintance proved so amusing that the appointed hour arrived before I was aware; and, to my surprise—for, I confess, I had not expected him—my boy appeared, pale, heavy-eyed, and owning that he had had no dinner. Over his supper, for which he showed little appetite, he made acquaintance with Jarvis. Then we wandered out toward the Casino, and the glorious moonlight tempted us to seek the Promenade des Anglais and take seats on the terrace of the Blue Bath House.

I was determined that Dick should hear the story in regard to Gabrielle de la Croix, to which

Jarvis had alluded in the morning, and about which I had just begun to question him when my nephew joined us at table.

"Come, Jarvis," I said, abruptly: "I want to hear what it was that happened to poor old Benjamin. I remember him very well: he always went about in a wheeled chair."

"Exactly. He lost the use of his legs from a hurt he got while rescuing his mother from a burning house."

"Yes—a splendid fellow," said I. "A Jew of the best sort—everybody liked him. Luckily, he had a great fortune to make the burden of life a little easier. So some woman was cruel enough to deal him a worse hurt than the physical accident had been?"

A touch of my foot against his warned Jarvis—whose intuitions were fairly feminine in their quickness—that I did not wish the woman's name mentioned.

"A good deal worse," Jarvis replied. "Before that, in spite of his terrible misfortune, he was the most cheerful old fellow alive—used to go everywhere in his wheeled chair, to dinners and balls, and everybody was glad to have him. Well, little Miss Puss and her mother came to Nice. Heavens, how pretty the girl was—barely seventeen, fresh as a rose, and looked as modest as a violet, and was harder at bottom than Lady Macbeth."

"I've seen specimens of that genus," said I.

"But never one of that age to equal her, I'll be bound; and then she had her mother, who was wickedness incarnate, to help her," pursued Jarvis. "Well, Puss devoted herself to Benjamin: used to sit by him at balls, instead of dancing; was always at the side of his chair, on the promenade and every other public place. The mother pretended to be dreadfully vexed at what she called the girl's 'insanity'; but the matter went on till poor Benjamin really believed Puss loved him: in fact, she told him so. Of course, madame wouldn't hear of an engagement: but her daughter insisted, and it came to that in the end. Benjamin made his future bride a large settlement. Why, the wedding-clothes were nearly ready, and he had given her a reasonable fortune in jewels."

Jarvis paused for an instant, and I saw that Dick—who, at first, had seemed to pay no attention—was listening eagerly.

"And what was the denouement?" I asked.

"Oh, fit for one of Sardou's plays," said Jarvis. "Just then, young Pierce came down from Paris—one of that rich American family, you know—and, the first time he set eyes on the girl, lost his head completely. He went perfectly

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mad over her; and, though I and a few others knew that Pierce had spent his own fortune and was dependent on his aunt, we wouldn't say a word: for we pitied poor Benjamin, and wanted the girl to show her hand."

"And she did?" I inquired.

"Completely," said Jarvis, in a satisfied tone. "She threw over Benjamin, but kept all the pearls and diamonds; and the poor old fellow went away nearly brokenhearted, but a good deal wiser. Then, suddenly, Pierce's aunt swooped down into Nice and carried her nephew off, and pretty Miss Puss fell between two stools. She has had many disappointments since; but I think that was the worst defeat, both for madame and Gabrielle."

After all, he had spoken the name. I expected to see Dick spring at his throat; but the young man rose, said a hasty good-night, and sauntered away.

The next morning, just after I was dressed, Dick came into my room and handed me five bank-notes, each of a thousand francs.

"So you won, after all," said I, discontentedly; but he shook his head.

"I stopped short, after I got the telegram and the money," he answered. "Uncle Richard, I find that I'm only a big boy still; but I'm not quite a fool. Your goodness in granting my hasty demand seemed somehow to open my eyes. I determined at least not to play any more, last night."

"Good boy!" said I. "And—and did you see Mademoiselle de la Croix?"

Dick gave an odd laugh, crimsoned, then paled, but continued bravely:

"I went over to the concert-room and listened to the orchestra for awhile, then went out, and was walking up and down the antechamber, when I came face-to-face with Gabrielle and the Brazilian. She smiled coldly—just said a few chilling words—and I was wondering whether to turn away or to insult her cavalier, when, in answer to a quick whisper from her, I heard him say distinctly: 'An old friend? Oh, then, my angel, tell him what is to happen.'"

"Well?" I asked, as the boy paused with a queer sound in his throat.

"Well," he repeated, "without a blush or tremor, Gabrielle said in the sweetest voice: 'The Señor de Carifias wishes me to present him to Monsieur Godwin, whom he and I beg to be present at our marriage on Thursday of next week.'"

"Good heavens!" I ejaculated.

"Oh, I didn't give way, Uncle Richard—I took it like a man, though my ears buzzed

and the room went round and round. I congratulated them both—said I was sure they were worthy of each other, and moved on. Then I met the countess, and she whispered in my ear: 'I liked you so much better than him; but it was a case of love at first sight with both of them. You must forgive my sweet Gabrielle—she tried to obey me and be as fond of you as I was.'"

"Stupendous woman!" I cried.

"I told her I was grateful," said Dick, "and bowed myself off just in time to catch the Nice train. But don't forget, Uncle Dick, that I stopped playing before I knew she had deserted me. I had already lost all my money. But yours is safe, and I am no poorer except in the matter of faith in woman."

"And you leave the refinement of the home-circle to come to this gaming-hole to study women?" I asked, calmly.

"Don't, Uncle Dick," he answered, sadly. "I should be at home now, and happy with the sweetest girl in the world, only that she would not marry me without my mother's consent—refused because she was poor."

"A valuable possession," quoth I, "the love of a man who could come straight away from 'the sweetest girl in the world' to fall a victim to a woman like Gabrielle de la Croix."

"I know—no girl could ever forgive me," he said; "I can't make anybody understand. I feel as if I had had a fever or been insane—it never was love. Well, I'm cured—though, maybe, too late. I'm going home. I'll earn my own living—at least, I can do that—dependence on my mother shan't make me grow utterly worthless."

I did not let the boy go at once—I took him away from Nice. During the lovely early summer days, we were wandering about the Pyrenees, and, one morning, when we were at that most picturesque of mountain-villages, St. Sauveur, Dick danced into my room, wildly waving a letter over his head.

"Think of mother's turning up such a trump!" he shouted. "She consents to my going into Stephens's law-office, in New York, and has invited my—Miss Dorothy Ventnor—to pass the summer with her at Newport."

"And who may Miss Dorothy Ventnor be?" I asked, innocently.

"Oh, you know!" he cried. "She was the girl my mother objected to because she was a school-teacher. I never for one moment ceased to love her! I was desperate between what I thought her coldness and the mother's hardness—rushed into the first insanity I could find—but

it's all right now! I shall tell Dorothy the whole story—she's an angel of goodness—she will forgive me."

"Brain-fever patients are always forgiven their vagaries," said I.

Master Dick started for London that night, and sailed for America by the first steamer. I missed the boy a good deal, but was thankful to have him gone. My life drifted back into its old quiet routine. I believe that during several months only one noteworthy bit of news reached me; it was that Señor de Cariñas had been wounded in a duel, and had returned to Brazil, leaving his wife to the care of her devoted mother, and doomed to live on the smallest pittance that ever limited the taste of an extravagant woman.

Just a year after that lovely June day in the Pyrenees, I was seated in my Paris apartment, when I received a letter from the boy Dick, now well on in his legal studies.

Antoine, the invaluable, brought the missive in along with my breakfast-tray, and I shall give the contents of the epistle, because, incoherently written as they are, they will fully explain my share in a high-handed and outrageous felony.

"Oh, you heavenly Uncle Richard! How I should like to hug you for conceiving such a plot, and that blessed old Antoine for carrying it out so perfectly! But how you must have missed his services during all those months while he was enacting the part of thief!

"I ought to have known that outside of a novel no mother could lay aside theory and prejudice so quickly as mine did, but you are aware that I don't perceive even evident facts very readily. Not a word did Lawyer Stephens breathe to Dorothy or me until a short time ago; but, before I came back to America, he had told my mother that Dorothy would have a competency if she became my wife. Now I know that her fifty thousand dollars was a present from you, which I prize the more, because it was a gift to my darling, instead of my graceless self.

"Well, the telegraph duly informed you that we were married last week. Mr. Stephens handed Dorothy your other wedding-gift—a check for the Monte Carlo money—which Antoine had deposited in his hands when he reached New York, instead of being safe in South America, as the police and I supposed. That money—you know enough now of Dorothy to expect some such good deed from her—she has used it to found a hospital for orphan children.

"I believe this is all my news, for you know already that I am the happiest fellow alive, and your loving nephew Dick."

A COTTAGE TRAGEDY.

BY ELLA RODMAN CHURCH.

It was a finished poem, that cottage; made, too, like a poem, out of nothing; converted from a sort of shanty on the edge of the woods, the residence of a wild Arab tribe of O'Flaherty's, whose over-full quiver of the poor man's blessings were a constant affliction to their neighbors, to a rustic lodge, where poets and artists might rejoice to live. We had done it all ourselves, too, and done it well, because we were women.

We had been obliged, of course, to see a greasy coat or two hung on our front fence for days in succession, while the owners put our very irregular grounds into some sort of order; and trees had to be hewn down here and there, every stump of which was instantly converted into a rustic flower-vase; and the garden had to be laid out and planted first, to give us a fair start. One obstinate rocky mound, that could neither be moved nor ignored, was, by a sudden flash of inspiration, transmuted into a rockery. Ferns, and all manner of pretty wild things, were planted over it; and we congratulated each other upon being on the outskirts of the woods. Afterward, however, we changed our minds. The wild things took kindly to the soil, and in many instances, were prettier than what we bought of the florist.

Meanwhile, our house was unique, and so pretty, as we told each other every hour in the day. We had furnished it principally with packing-boxes, with the addition of a few such trifles as creton, small mattresses, Swiss muslin, pink and blue ribbons, etc., and thereby developed a gift for upholstering that, but for the circumstance of going to housekeeping with next to nothing to spend for furniture, might have kept company with that countless array of gems of purest ray serene, and flowers that are born to blush unseen. To be sure, the nature of our belongings required us to move among them as carefully as though they had been made of glass, or were likely to vanish like the baseless fabric of a dream; and each day was sandwiched between an immense amount of folding and unfolding, tying and untying, putting up and taking down; but, so far as mere prettiness went, they were certainly very pretty.

It was really exciting to take old kitchen chairs, and paint them a bright vermillion, putting in seats of broad scarlet and white worsted

brail; or to convert a fossil remain from some one's great-grandmother's parlor into an ebony affair, with a stripe of dead gold. But dabbling in vermillion is almost as dangerous as the tiger's taste of blood, and we found it difficult to refrain from giving everything a coat of melted sealing-wax. Shellac, too, is a delusion and a snare; and one of us was found walking in her sleep, with the varnish-bottle and brush in hand, just about to try its virtues on the countenance of her unsuspecting relative.

Aside from our creative faculties, our cottage may be said to have been furnished from other people's garrets; and while collecting together our household gods, we found ourselves casting covetous eyes on every piece of furniture that looked at all out of the common way. The possessive pronoun, applied to a local habitation, was particularly fascinating to Bohemians like ourselves, who had hitherto haunted city boarding-houses, until the obliging demise of a distant relative somewhere in the western wilds put us in possession of an elegant insufficiency, on the strength of which we became landed proprietors; for the cottage was offered to us for "a mere song," and we had strong hankerings after a roof of our own.

So, after singing the song, which meant making quite a hole in our bank-stock, we set about transforming our purchase with such womanly energy, that we were soon regarded as the especial torments of all the shiftless men in the neighborhood, who professed to do odd jobs. They did not like being interrupted in the amusing occupation of twirling their thumbs to do things right off, or not at all. "Just like women!" they grumbled; and, with an injured expression of countenance, they crawled about their tasks, and accomplished about as much in a day as we could have done in two hours, had we been gifted with the physical strength.

But things got done somehow; and having worked like bees inside of the house, and provided ourselves with the traditional "respectable woman," who seems to be the indispensable appendage to such households, we were ready to stop existing, and begin to live. So delicious as that first meal, under our own roof, tasted, though it consisted of bread and butter, and round hearts, eaten off a packing-box; and we

felt very much like children playing "baby-house."

By-and-by, visitors came; visitors from palatial mansions, who assured us that our little nest was charming; "so like things one sees abroad." But one lady, an envious sort of person, after glancing rather superciliously at our rockery and ferns, and other rural belongings, asked, carelessly,

"And you don't feel afraid here, with all these dark woods so near?"

"Afraid!" We laughed at the idea. We never thought of such a thing. Every one told us that it was such a particularly safe place.

"Every place is safe," replied the visitor, sententiously, "until something happens."

Now, wasn't it hateful of her? We had very little peace after that; and although one side of the cottage was close upon the road, we could not forget that the other was in the shadow of the woods. It was a one-storied affair, too. Our sleeping-room was down stairs, and up stairs was only an attic, where the respectable woman enjoyed the sound slumbers of the unimaginative.

On the night of the very day when we had been aroused to a sense of our unprotected state, our fears culminated. Dot pooh-poohed them, to be sure, and pretended not to be disturbed in the least. But the conviction that we were destined to have our throats cut in the silence of the night, was gaining upon me. I glared about, uneasily, in the moonlight; but the trees only cast quiet shadows over the road, and the vines trembled a little in the night air.

I was roused, finally, from a half-sleep, by a subdued sound of voices under the window, and an ague-fit immediately took possession of me. I shook and shook; the very bed was shaken under me, and I wondered that it didn't waken Dot.

The wretches outside were probably discussing the easiest means of effecting an entrance, of course, with the object of plunder, and I immediately ran over in my mind an inventory of our available possessions. "Your silver, or your life!" would, doubtless, be the war-cry; and I thought, with a groan, of our great-grandmother's tea-pot, that had been an object of worship in the family ever since I could remember; and a hideous-looking idol it was. There was not much else beside spoons, forks, and a few trifles. But if the worst came to the worst, we could make a stand upon that tea-pot. Perhaps we had better follow the example of the lone lady, who nightly placed her silver in a basket at the foot of the first stair-case, with a note requesting

ing burglars to decamp quietly with their booty, and not molest the inmates. If we could only rouse Matilda in her attic! And what a desirable sleeping-place that attic seemed to be just then! But I dared not attempt to move.

Presently, Dot whispered,

"Are you awake?"

"Yes," I replied, with chattering teeth, "I have been awake for an hour."

"So have I. What can we do?"

"Bid each other farewell, like the Babes in the Woods," was my cheerful reply, as I drew the bed-clothes over my head, "and depart this life with what grace we may."

"Priscilla Driftwood!" exclaimed Dot, bounding up in bed, with flashing eyes, "I'm perfectly ashamed of you! Depart this life, indeed! After all we've done to get settled in a home of our own. Let them take the silver, and welcome; it isn't at all likely that they want us. But anything is better than this suspense."

And Dot was fairly out upon the floor, and at the *baufest*, before I could stop her. The moonlight showed everything distinctly, and I felt, as I lay there shaking and helpless, that I was living in a story, and that all these incidents were purely imaginative. I read lately of a heroine who was described as "a graceful young lady, with a wealth of golden hair." My sister Dot was all this, and much more, as she flitted about with the softening grace of moonlight upon her face; and, wrapping herself in a scarlet shawl, she grasped the teapot, and ran to the window.

Two men were there, and a wagon—they were fully equipped for their unrighteous spoils; and with a spasm of courage, Dot threw up the sash, and, thrusting the teapot at them, gasped out,

"Take it quickly, and be off! There is nothing else in the house worth taking."

One of the burglars immediately raised his hat, and came nearer; the other stared at the apparition with a vacant grin on his face.

"Sure, an' it's crazy she is, intirely," he muttered, with a decided brogue.

"Go this instant!" continued Dot, getting very indignant. "I tell you we have nothing else for you, and you have nearly killed my sister!"

"We are really very sorry," said the taller of the two. "But we are in considerable trouble, and would be glad to know if there is any gentleman about the house?"

"None that is awake," replied Dot, with great caution, as she looked steadily at the speaker.

But he began to laugh; and, to my great amazement, Dot laughed, too.

"There certainly is a mistake here," said the gentleman, who had changed his opinion as to

her being a lunatic. "We have met with a serious accident in the breaking down of the wagon, and were discussing the propriety of asking for help, not knowing that your house was occupied only by ladies. Pray, pity the sorrows of a poor young man, and forgive the alarm that I would not, for worlds, have caused you."

Here I came to the rescue, having poetically attired myself in a disreputable wrapper that should have been in the rag-bag long ago, and with my hair screwed into an ugly little knot on top of my head; but of all this I only became conscious when it was too late. It did not seem enough that I had been named Priscilla. I was fated always to appear at a disadvantage; while the name of Dorothy could not crush my more favored sister.

We finally came to an understanding; and now that the veil of terror was lifted from our eyes, our burglars resolved themselves into a very nice-looking young gentleman, and his Hibernian charioteer—the former of whom had lost the night-train a mile or two off, and had engaged the latter to drive him to his father's residence, about ten miles distant. But Patrick's vehicle gave out unexpectedly, and retired on the disabled list just in front of our domicile; and after discussing the matter awhile, and almost preparing to spend the night in the road, they had just decided to pull our bell, when Dot made such an unexpected onset upon them with the silver teapot.

Mr. Irving expressed his thanks for the article so generously offered, but could not see that it would be particularly useful in this emergency; and Dot retired in great confusion.

The travelers were directed to a house of entertainment for man and beast, about half a mile

off; and, with many thanks and apologies, our new acquaintance departed.

"I declare," exclaimed Dot, as we sought our couch again for what remained of the night, "I have a great mind to throw that horrid old teapot out of the window; such an absurd figure as I must have cut with it!"

"You need not mind the teapot," I groaned. "Think of my wrapper! The first rag-man that comes along shall have it."

In a day or two Mr. Irving came, and brought his mother—a charming elderly lady, who seemed to take us at once under her wing, and consoled with us in the most motherly fashion on the fright we must have suffered. But all this was to Dot, of course; I only came in as make-weight; for my hair didn't "ripple to my waist" on that eventful night, nor did I have presence of mind enough to put on a picturesque shawl. Such a picture, Mrs. Irving said, had been drawn for her; but I didn't sit for the portrait.

Our fascinating visitor went into quite an ecstasy over the cottage, but said that she did not think it right for us to live there. Her son proved to be of the same opinion; but a great many shadows were cast by the event which resulted in the breaking-up of our cozy nest.

Having a fatal gift for overhearing things not intended for the public, I, one afternoon, caught the words:

"You told me, at our first meeting, Dot, that there was nothing in the house worth taking but the silver teapot. I quite disagreed with you, but I did not dare to say so then. Will you give me what I think the greatest valuable of all?"

Of course, he carried off Dot. And that ended the tragedy.

AN UNINTENTIONAL DECEPTION.

BY ANNA M. DWIGHT.



On this particular morning, the customary discussion was brought to a premature close by the arrival of the mail. Ralph's were mainly business letters, and he soon disposed of them; but his sister found hers more interesting. Suddenly she glanced up from a closely written sheet with an exclamation of pleasure.

THE pretty breakfast-room at Thornhurst, the summer home of the Collingwoods, was occupied only by the son and daughter of the house.

Ralph Collingwood was a broad-shouldered, long-limbed fellow, bronzed and bearded, about thirty-five years of age, though he looked older. His only sister Grace was a handsome woman past twenty-five, with a determined face in strong contrast to her brother's rather lazy expression of countenance, which might or might not conceal an equal determination. They were having their usual international dispute as to the respective merits of things English and American. Ralph, who had traveled a good deal in England and liked that country, always advocated its claims, while his sister asserted her patriotism in a warm defense of her native land. Grace always grew particularly enthusiastic in praise of American women, the motive of which enthusiasm was so plain to Ralph that he smiled inwardly and provoked her still further. Her dearest wish, which she unwisely made too evident, had been for years that her brother should marry her most intimate friend, Dorothy Vernon. Miss Vernon visited a great deal at the house, and Ralph always paid her sufficient attention; but he had never given any indication of being in love with her.

"Well?" Ralph interrogated.

"Isn't that delightful?" cried Grace; then she ran her eye rapidly down the page, while the other patiently awaited her answer. "You know that pretty little cottage up the road?" she continued, at length.

"You mean Woodbine Cottage?"

"Yes; it is in good order and nicely furnished. Dorothy wants me to see about renting it for her this summer."

"Will her aunt come with her?" Ralph asked, in some surprise.

"No, indeed; nothing would induce her to give up going to Saratoga, though Dorothy hates it so—she imagines the waters are good for her liver-complaint. I am always begging Dorothy to spend the summer with me, but she never will do it, though she likes it here immensely."

"Sensible girl!" was Ralph's thought, but he did not venture to give it utterance.

"Well, to make a long story short," continued Grace, "she has at last persuaded her English sister-in-law to spend the summer in America; so they will stay here most of the time, while the aunt will go to Saratoga with her companion."

"That is her brother Harry's widow, isn't it?"

"Yes; the one that went to Australia and married an English girl there. He died a

year or so afterward, under painful circumstances—I think he was rather dissipated—leaving her with a baby. She returned to England, and has lived there with distant relatives ever since. Her little girl is five years old now, Dorothy says.”

“I remember something about it,” Ralph said. “Is she young?”

“Dorothy doesn’t say; I don’t believe she

“But perhaps the widow hasn’t,” suggested Ralph, “and that would be rough on Dorothy.”

“Well, at any rate, the sister-in-law arrives in New York this week, and I am to make all the arrangements for renting Woodbine Cottage; they would like to come here as soon as possible. I must see the agent at once. Will you go with me?”



knows exactly, for they have never seen each other.”

“How do they know they will get on?” asked Ralph, in some amusement. “They’d better find out before trying to live together.”

“Oh, they are sure to agree,” was the reply. “Dorothy has a lovely disposition.”

“Certainly,” answered her brother, and the two went to get ready for their call.

In a little more than a fortnight, the sisters-in-law were comfortably established in their new home. The widow proved an agreeable surprise, for she was young and attractive-looking. She had a little air of independ-

ence that was thoroughly American, and a low-toned voice such as only a well-bred Englishwoman possesses. Although secretly disappointed to find her so young and good-looking, Grace could not resist the charm of her manner, and was as pleased with her as Miss Vernon herself had become in their short acquaintance.

Miss Collingwood did everything to make things pleasant for her guests, as she considered them, and her brother ably seconded her efforts. In fact, he seemed to be suddenly waked up and so enthusiastic that after a while Grace began to have her suspicions. Mrs. Vernon's small maid, Rose, was perfectly devoted to the young man, a devotion which he returned with equal fervor; but the mother's manner was unexceptionable, as Grace was forced to admit at the end of several weeks' close observation on her part.

Various festivities appropriate to the season passed off delightfully, and finally a neighborhood picnic was projected and arranged for the twentieth of June. The fates were unusually propitious, for the day proved to be an ideal one. Most of the party assembled at Thornhurst, for the rendezvous was the grounds of the handsomest property in the vicinity, belonging to the immediate neighbor of the Collingwoods, who had gone to Europe, but left them free permission to make use of his place. The provisions were carried to the spot in a wagon; but it was such a short distance that the carriages were left in the stables at Thornhurst, and the young people walked. At the last minute, Miss Collingwood decided that there was one basket which she was afraid to entrust to the wagon, so she remained behind with Miss Vernon to see it safely in the hands of their dignified English servant, who brought up the rear with her parasol and wrap, which, in her preoccupation with other things, she had nearly forgotten. The others had all gone ahead, except some children who were loitering in the rear and a pair of lovers who strayed aside on some pretext and were taking a roundabout way to reach their destination.

Just in front of a low stone wall which separated the two estates, Grace stopped on the pretense of pointing out to her friend the best possible place for dinner, but in reality to observe whether Dorothy noticed

how completely absorbed Ralph was in Mrs. Vernon and her daughter.

"Ah, there is Ralph ahead with Rose and her mother," said that young lady, with apparent unconcern; so Grace was careful not to disturb this state of mind by any remark, but walked on in silence. They soon arrived at the picnic grounds, and after that she was too much occupied to observe her brother very closely.

The affair was a complete success. Everything passed off delightfully, with but one accident to mar its pleasure. There was in the park a small lake, or rather pond, on which tiny pleasure-boats might be rowed. It attracted the children chiefly, and, after luncheon, little Rose Vernon, accompanied by her nurse, was playing in its vicinity. In a moment, when her attendant's attention was distracted, she managed to go too near the edge and fell in. Most of the nurses had wandered off, and those who were left, losing their heads completely, stood helpless by, shrieking and wringing their hands. The children who were in the boats were almost frightened to death, and only one small boy had presence of mind enough to run with the tidings to the rest of the picnickers. On his way toward them, he encountered Mr. Collingwood coming at Mrs. Vernon's request to look after her daughter. Scarcely waiting to hear the end of the explanation, he hurried to the spot, had his coat off, and was in the water. In a very few moments, he had swum ashore with the half-unconscious child and was using every means in his power to resuscitate her. By this time, the news had been carried to the rest of the party, and a number of people had gathered about, among them the almost frantic mother. Rose, who had quickly revived, looked up smiling, and the next moment she was clasped in Mrs. Vernon's arms.

"Rose, Rose, my darling!" the mother sobbed; then, remembering her daughter's rescuer, she turned to him and held out her hand, saying: "How can I ever thank you, Mr. Collingwood?"

The light of a sudden conviction leaped into Ralph Collingwood's eyes, and he knew how she might reward him; but he dared not speak his thought, so he merely pressed the hand she had given him and murmured the usual platitudes.

They carried Rose to Thornhurst and left her there with the nurse and Mrs. Vernon, who positively refused to allow anyone to remain with her. There was a physician among the party, who declared that the little girl seemed no worse for her accident, but simply needed to rest. The remainder of the day passed off pleasantly, though to Ralph it had lost its zest. He devoted himself to Dorothy—on the principle, I suppose, that if not the rose, she was near the rose—and Grace was well contented with the conclusion of the picnic.

The following day, the small maid was well enough to be moved, so Ralph took her and her mother home. The bond between the child and her grown-up friend was strengthened tenfold by this little incident. His devotion to Rose served to draw the mother nearer to him, and they became very good friends indeed.

The picnic was followed by a succession of gayeties, and the summer fled apace. So far as outward appearances went, things remained the same. Ralph was constantly at Woodbine Cottage, but no one seemed to imagine that he went to see either of the sisters-in-law, so impartially did he divide his attentions between them—bestowing, in fact, his most ostentatious devotion on the small maid of the household. The truth is, he had discovered that the widow did not expect anything but friendliness from him; she gave him no encouragement to go beyond this. No one but Grace had any suspicions as to his true state of mind, and even with her they were only the wildest suspicions. She did not dare to communicate them to Miss Vernon, who seemed to have no jealous fears of her sister-in-law. The two women were apparently as fond of each other as ever. Miss Collingwood could not understand it, for she was as certain that Dorothy would marry her brother, if he should ask her, as she was certain of her own wishes in the matter. She could not resist sometimes making little speeches that she did not intend or want to indulge in.

"I did not know you were so fond of children, Ralph," she said, sarcastically, one day when he had been especially devoted to Rose.

The young man smiled and said calmly:

"My dear sis, you have not had much opportunity for observing. I have always

liked them; but there are children *and* children."

The friends had discussed together the desirability of going to the mountains or seashore, where the inmates of Thornhurst usually spent part of the summer.

"Do let us stay here in quiet Woodbine Cottage, away from everybody but just the friends one wants to see! It is so healthful for Rose; she is growing plump and rosy."

As Mrs. Vernon said this, Miss Collingwood glanced at her, and it suddenly occurred to her—perhaps in contrast to these words—that the young widow was looking thin. While she was thinking thus, Dorothy reinforced the last remark.

"Oh, yes, indeed!" she cried. "You don't know what a delight it is to me to spend a whole summer in the country. I am so tired of Saratoga and Richfield Springs! I am positively growing younger."

They all laughed and Ralph said:

"I heartily agree with you. Give me Thornhurst and Woodbine Cottage!"

So it was settled, for Grace did not care to raise a dissentient voice. It was all one to her where she was, if only her cherished hopes might be fulfilled—if Dorothy was satisfied. The one man she had ever cared about sufficiently to give up her independence for him had quarreled with her and married another woman, so she had long ago merged all her personal expectations into the scheme of uniting her two nearest and dearest.

Almost imperceptibly August deepened into September, and the summer heat still lingered. In her character of on-looker, Grace noticed that Mrs. Vernon seemed growing thinner, and one day she determined to find out whether Ralph had remarked it, so she said to him:

"Don't you think Mrs. Vernon looks thinner than when she came here?"

"Have you observed it?" There was a distinct ring of anxiety in his voice. "I've thought so for a long time; but, since no one else appeared to see it, I thought it must be my own imagining. When I spoke of it to her once, she only laughed at me."

"Well, you were not mistaken," answered Grace; "for I, at least, am not likely to take such a fancy concerning Mrs. Vernon."

"You like her, do you not?" Ralph asked, almost humbly.

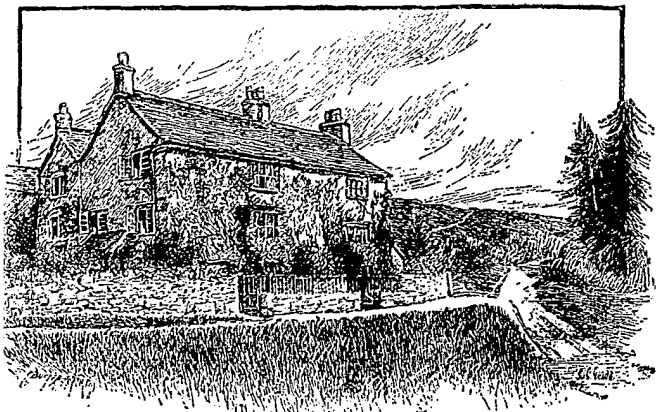
"Very much," replied his sister, but her tone was not encouraging.

Matters went on in the same way for several weeks, and might have continued to do so indefinitely, had not Ralph Collingwood received an unexpected letter. As the molten mass at the interior of our earth may remain quiescent until some sudden disturbance causes it to manifest itself in some way above the surface, so it was with Ralph's new feeling. He had never yet received any encouragement from his idol, and he knew what a bitter disappointment it would be to his sister, though he told himself it would be worse than conceited to imagine this regarding anyone else; so, with the fondness of mortals for drifting, he allowed himself to

He looked up, and there stood Mrs. Vernon and Rose. He rose mechanically, walked toward them, and removed his pipe from his mouth; but he scarcely returned her greeting or heard her words of explanation, for his eyes were fixed on the sheet in his hand.

"Pardon us for interrupting you," Mrs. Vernon cried, gayly. "Rose thought you would not mind. We had an errand in the village, and we came here to see whether Miss Collingwood was coming over to spend the day with us. The servants told me she was in bed, so I felt anxious—" But here the speaker stopped, alarmed by the expression on her host's face.

He was leaning against the little table



be content with the present. There came a break at last.

Ralph had risen rather early, and had taken his coffee in a secluded corner of the garden adjoining the orchard. Grace was in bed with a headache, and his father was in town; so he had breakfasted alone, and, lighting his pipe, had ordered his letters and papers brought to him.

"You needn't take away the table," he said to the servant. "I may wish to write here."

A moment later, he was leaning back comfortably, smoking and glancing over his correspondence. He had just broken open his last letter, when he heard his name spoken.

"Mr. Collingwood!"

for support. Rose, her doll in her arms, had gone up close to him to take his hand, but he hardly noticed her. Mrs. Vernon herself felt a shock of fear, and leaned her arm in the notch of the old tree under which she was standing, while she waited for him to speak.

"Will you send Rose away, please?" he said at last.

"Certainly; run into the front garden, dear," Mrs. Vernon said.

Slowly and unwillingly the small maid took her departure, leaving the two alone together.

"I had not meant to speak quite so soon; I feared to try my fate," began Ralph. "But now I must. I must ask you to tell me, though I know there cannot be, whether

there is any reason why I should not love you, why I should not offer you my hand in marriage."

Mrs. Vernon glanced from the speaker to the letter in his hand, and, with a woman's quick intuition, understood.

"Is it possible," she cried, a spasm of pain passing over her face, "that someone has been so cruel as to utter insinuations against me? Is it possible, too, that you do not know?"

There was a moment's silence, eloquent with misery; then, as she still remained silent, he exclaimed passionately:

and only friends! Oh, I did not mean to deceive you, but I have been punished!"

A sudden light flashed into his eyes.

"Do you care? Do you care?" he cried.

"Hush!" she answered, sternly, and he knew she did. "It is all so very painful; but I suppose I must tell you," she went on. "He was dissipated, and, in a fit of passion—a quarrel over money-matters—he killed a man, and they sentenced him to twenty years; that was when Rose was a baby—she does not know."

Ralph dared not speak; the desire to take



"Go on, please. I do not understand. Anything is better than this suspense."

"I thought you and Grace knew—that Dorothy must have told you, she was so intimate with you—that her brother, my husband, is not dead, but in prison in Australia." Her voice died away in a groan of despair, and there was silence again. She waited for him to speak; but, since he did not, she continued in a voice sharp with anguish: "I felt so safe—I thought we might be friends

her in his arms and comfort her was so strong, and her eyes forbade it. He longed to draw from her an avowal of love, but he must not; fate was so cruel!

"And I have not helped you any; I have only made your life harder," he said, finally.

"Never mind," she whispered. "I am not—together—sorry."

"Mamma, mamma, may I not come back? I am so tired of waiting," cried a childish voice.

"Yes, dear," her mother answered, mechanically. "Good-bye," turning to Ralph and holding out her hand as she spoke.

"I must see you again. Surely—"

"No, no; I am going away as soon as possible. We must never see each other again," she whispered, hastily.

"Never?"

"Never," she repeated, and he knew she meant it.

"Good-bye," he said, slowly. "God bless you!" and he lifted her hand to his lips.

"Good-bye," she murmured, and walked away, followed by Rose, whose small dignity had been so wounded by her friend's unusual neglect that she would not make any effort to attract his attention.

"What is the matter with Uncle Ralph, mamma?" she asked, presently.

"He is not well, dear," was her mother's response. "He will be all right again to-morrow."

When they reached home, Mrs. Vernon complained that the heat of the sun had given her a headache, and, after telling Dorothy about Grace's illness, went straight to her room. Her sister-in-law decided to go over to Thornhurst herself later, so she was undisturbed the remainder of the day. Mr. Collingwood left a message for his sister and took a morning train to New York, "on business." Both of them had remembered.

The anonymous letter and now had leisure to wonder over it. Who could have sent it? Neither could imagine, though Mrs. Vernon finally became sure that it was an Australian acquaintance of her husband's, who had appeared unexpectedly in New York.

The next day, Dorothy went over to see her friend, with a doleful piece of news.

"What do you think, Grace?" she wailed. "Rose's English relatives have sent for her, and she feels she must go to them. I thought she would spend the winter in America, at least."

"I am very sorry," was the reply. "But now you can stay here and comfort me. Ralph writes from New York that he will be obliged to go to California to attend to some property his uncle left him. Isn't it too bad?"

Grace looked keenly at her friend's face, but it expressed only sorrow, not suspicion. Dorothy's knowledge of her sister-in-law's true position had relieved her of anxiety on that score. As for Miss Collingwood, she was not entirely inconsolable. She did not know the truth, but she believed that her brother had proposed and been rejected; and, though such conduct on the widow's part was inexplicable to the fond sister, she rejoiced over it, hoping that, if Mrs. Vernon should return to England, Ralph might console himself with Dorothy.

And perhaps he will.

CAPTAIN JIM'S TEST

BY ISABEL HORNIBROOKE, AUTHOR OF "IN THE SERVICE," "MADEMOISELLE AIDA," ETC.



H, I say, Princess, do be quick and come to the hanging part!"

Thus pleaded, with a bloodthirsty hunger in his look, a chubby-cheeked and brown-eyed specimen of innocent seven-year-old

boyhood, lying on his back on a handsome parlor hearth-rug and listening with much impatience to the time-worn story of "Queen Esther and her people."

"So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai," read slowly a girl of eighteen, with eyes of chestnut-brown like the child's, and with a sufficient resemblance to him to mark her as his sister. "Does that satisfy you, little monster?" she added.

"Yes, but how high did they hang him?" gasped Innocence, with relish worthy of a state executioner.

"Fifty cubits high!"

"Fifty cubits! Why, that was higher than the old church steeple!" said the boy, in great excitement. "Wasn't it, Captain Jim?" he shouted, addressing a gentleman who at this critical moment lounged into the parlor, where the reading was going on, with his fingers in his pockets.

"No, I guess it wasn't—not quite," replied the individual styled Captain Jim, when the subject of the question had been explained to him, keeping one eye on the child and the other upon the brown head of the girl who sat by the table, with the dark volume before her, from which she had been expounding the details of a Scripture history lesson.

"Don't you want to run out now, Max?" the new-comer suggested, wistfully, as an after-thought. "Surely lessons might be over for to-day, and I want to talk to Princess."

"Yes, you're always wanting to talk to Princess! And I'll engage it was higher, all the same!" grumbled Max, with furious ill-humor, as he rose from the carpet, betook himself slowly to the door, and slammed it after him.

When the noise of his departure had died away, Captain Jim walked to the window and stood for a few minutes silently looking out. He was a fair, slight, handsome man, exceedingly well drilled, but with little otherwise of an orthodox martial air about him. From his blonde silken mustache and fair skin to his shining shoes, he looked a being who might handle a cane more happily than a musket, and more fitted to tread Broadway on a fine afternoon than the bloody sword of a battle-field. And yet Captain Jim Noble was an officer in the staunch army of the American republic.

Having remained for a spell in dumb consideration or perhaps in working up his courage—a quality which, albeit that he was facing no enemy's guns, big or little, failed him grievously at this moment—Captain Jim turned again and stepped hesitatingly toward the table.

The brown-eyed girl shut her book and fidgeted uneasily at his approach.

"Well, Princess," began this son of Mars, clearing his throat with a nervousness which was no disgrace to his profession or to the flag he served, even while unconsciously he squared out his shoulders as though to make the most of himself in offering that self, such as it was, to the girl he loved, "well, Princess, what have you got to say to me? I have come for my answer."

Princess, as the brown-eyed girl was called in her father's household, though she had once been duly baptized in sober American as Dorothy Courtney, shot a keen glance at the speaker, blinked her eyelashes, turned a shade pale, and remained silent.

"You know you promised me an answer to-day," went on Captain Jim, presently, a little reproachfully. "Forgive my hurrying you! But, Dorothy—Dorothy darling! my time is short."

There was urgent pleading passion in the soldier's voice; but he strove, and only too successfully, to subdue the expression of it and to keep his tones gentle, to suit the weakness of her whom he addressed.

And even while he was speaking, Dorothy, after that one sharp glance at him, had been hardening her heart against him and striving to ignore a rising feeling which she was desperately afraid had much likeness to a certain emotion named in four letters, of which she wished to profess herself quite ignorant—love. Foolish Dorothy!

Foolish Princess, indeed! She had heard of sundry and many martial heroes. There was fiery King David with his mighty men, in the history from which she had been reading, and countless warriors of divers nations and divers ranks, since his time, whose names were preserved in her thoughts as a gallant muster-roll. But not one of them all, according to her imagination, bore any resemblance to the soldier who wooed her—or rather, he had no resemblance to them. Was it possible, she questioned, that this nineteenth-century knight, with his slow polished accents, society manners, and perfect array, was of a like spirit with those heroes whose bravery she revered? Dorothy did not believe it. And she had long ago decided that the lover to whom she should give herself must, above all, be able to quit himself like a man. Therefore she opened her lips at last and rashly answered:

"Forgive me if I am hurting your feelings, but indeed I do not feel that you are exactly the—the—style of man whom I could—"

That sentence was never finished. With a great wrench, the door-knob was turned. A sandy head was thrust into the room. A rough Irish brogue panted out:

"Miss Dorothy! Miss Dorothy! For heaven's sake, come quick! By all the sows that ever left us, Master Max is down in the well!"

"What well?" gasped Dorothy, wildly.

"Oh, wirra! the owld pump in the back yard. Sorra bit o' me knows how he got near it, but the ground broke onder him; an' there he is, wid the earth and stones rattlin' down on him, screechin' like a young divil—the poor little innocent angel! Oh, wirra! wirra!"

Molly Quill, the bearer of this dire intelligence, poured it forth without waiting to catch a breath; but her closing lament, which rose to a shriek as she wrung her hands in dismay, was lost upon the two whom she had surprised. Indeed, ere she was half through, Captain Jim, who had taken in the

position more quickly than the child's sister, was already out of the house and finding his way to the back yard.

The sight which greeted him there confirmed, in a measure, Molly's words. In a far corner of the yard was an old pump, which had fallen lately into disuse because a portion of the pavement about it was judged to be insecure. It had been protected by a timber railing while awaiting removal, and every member of Senator Courtney's household, from Dorothy, the eldest daughter, to the poorest help, warned not to go near it. But Senator Courtney and his wife were from home to-day, and Max, their youthful hopeful son, had had his temper sorely outraged by contradiction about the height of the gallows on which the miserable Haman was hanged. He had quitted the parlor, ripe for mischief.

Prowling forth upon an amiable quest after it, his attention was caught by the pump. A sharp glance certified to him that no one was near. With infinite difficulty, he squeezed his body between the wooden rails and started to work at the stiff rusty pump-handle.

The sweat came out on his brow with the vigor of his efforts. An impish whoop of delight broke from his throat. But ah me! it was a shout quickly silenced. Even under the boy's slight weight in his straining labor, the treacherous pavement gave way beneath his feet. Down it went, curbstones and mortar, and Max with it, into a yawning pit beneath.

The child's shriek of terror as he fell, more piercing than his former whoop, was heard by the servants in the house. They rushed to the scene of disaster, and Molly Quill, an Irish cook, flew with the tidings to the parlor.

When Captain Jim, followed by Dorothy, arrived at the pump, he discovered, with a thankful ejaculation, that the boy was not dead, nor indeed in the well, as Molly had pictured him. Through a providence, his fall had been stopped by two planks which crossed each other in the shaft, a little above the surface of the water. To these he was clinging, dazed and moaning, while clay and stones from above were still rattling upon him.

Dorothy had a very indistinct understanding of a scene which ensued, though, as

long as she lived, it would not leave her memory. She knew that in five minutes the yard was half filled with men. Whence they came, she saw not nor cared. But she perceived that there was one master mind which controlled them, one individual in their midst whose familiar accents, though concentrated now, were still slow, and his movements apparently unhurried, one in whom she trusted as his tones sounded in clear direction.

"We must rope that trough!" said Captain Jim. "My God! at any moment it may go down!"

A heavy stone trough was placed beneath the mouth of the pump, to receive its drippings. The ground under this had not yet given way. Would it do so? Dorothy waited at the idea. Any attempt of the men to move it would have meant certain death to the little sufferer below. The best they could do was to pass ropes through solid rings attached to it. Even this was fraught with danger too terrible for speech. It was accomplished at last, and a ladder lowered into the pit.

Now came a critical moment! The one policeman in the yard silently eyed the broken pavement and sidled off. Several of the ablest and most plucky of the men were holding the ropes sustaining the trough. There was a flash of uncertainty.

To hurl a ringing cheer and lead a dare-devil charge against an enemy, or fight till he bled over a stricken comrade, would, to Captain Jim's thinking, have required small courage, compared with what was needed to strip himself deliberately of coat and shoes and descend that ladder to save a child, whose cries were already growing feeble, with the agreeable prospect of having a reasonably pleasant life abruptly cut short by that trough coming down on his head, or

by a treacherous slip into the hideous depths of the well below.

Yet the soldier hesitated only while he fetched one sharp breath.

"Men," he said, while his eyes looked into his companions' like spirits of appeal, "men, you'll hold on to the trough?"

"We swear it!" broke forth a strong chorus of reply.

Then the hero of unheroic appearance vanished from sight.

A quarter of an hour afterward, he reappeared with torn shirt, face piebald with dirt, and hands cut and bloody, but bringing Max and himself in safety.

"God bless him!" sobbed the women.

"Brandy!" yelled the men.

What the child had borne fairly well was too much for his preserver, with the labor of rescuing him from the rubbish about him—the foul air of the shaft. Captain Jim reeled. But for half a dozen friendly hands gripping him, he would have come pretty roughly on his back in the yard.

Presently he opened his eyes in sickly fashion after a faint. Light and energy crept quickly into them. Dorothy, convinced that her small brother was not likely seriously to suffer, save by having his friskiness checked for a day or two, was kneeling by him and pressing her lips passionately to one of his hands, while thus she supplemented the sentence begun an hour before:

"Oh, my love! my love!" with a sob, "I never had a notion what bravery meant!"

"I say, my dear," interrupted Captain Jim, "don't be wasting that sort of good thing on my fingers. My mouth is a great deal more convenient."

And so sadly did the Princess forsake her dignity that, full in the sight of several on-lookers, her red lips nestled shyly down on the blonde mustache.

DORIA'S AFFAIRS.

A SEQUEL TO "DR. WETHERGREEN'S PRACTICE."

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SUSY L——'S DIARY."

CHAPTER I.

LITTLE Mary Walton was so very little, that, when she stood with Ambrose at Dr. Wethergreen and Caddy's wedding, her orange flowers were just up to his wide shoulder; and he was by no means one of the tallest of men. It was seen all about that her head was even with his shoulder; and looks and observations touching the matter were passed from one to another, along the pews. And people smiled, as much as to say, "We shall see! *that's* what we shall!" Because her head was as high as his shoulder, that was all. Only he did have the feeling—which, perhaps, was magnetically felt; perhaps seen in the form stooping a little toward her—that he must, in a way, shield her, and see to her, after that, the rest of his days, "that she was not at all over-run and poked about and stared out of countenance." It made him think of it, he said, next morning at breakfast, seeing what a bit of a thing she was down there at his elbow, and how broad and high he was above her. Birdy was so jocund over it, over the laughter and the light clink of so many dishes at table, that the laughter, in the end, was turned altogether upon her. And Ambrose put his head down to look into Nan's face, (the gravest face at the table, by the way,) and said, "Ain't she a rascal, little Nan?"

Little Nan modestly hinted that she couldn't be called a rascal, very well, because she *wasn't* a male bird; and then birdy and all the rest made merry over that; somewhat to little Nan's discomfiture; until her brother reassured her by telling her, with his grave, sincere expression, that she was right; that, for his part, after that time, he should call her "Little Bunch." Birdy's feathers, on some sudden whim of hers, were all set out on end, at the moment, which probably suggested the idea to Ambrose.

Meanwhile, two squares or so out east, on the same street; sat three at breakfast, in a house large enough for twenty people. And to make out even three, they had just rang for Irish Mary to come up; thinking that, perhaps, with her merry face and her good appetite, they would be able to think of something else but this—that

they could have no more of Caddy there, to sit and eat with them, *just* as she always had done until that morning.

Irish Mary brought up the hot buckwheat cakes she had just been frying for her own breakfast, when she was called. She brought up, moreover, a very large amount of lively satisfaction in her heart, generated there by this new demonstration of the respect in which both her old and her young mistress held her—"as if they knew that I'd die for them as quick as any thing," she said to herself, with tears in her eyes, as she slipped off one apron and tied on another. It was perfectly natural, that, of this abundant, effervescing satisfaction, considerable portions should be reflected back, as they were, from Mary's shining face, and tossed from her merry tongue. When she found how sad their thoughts were inclined to be, running on their loss of Caddy, she shook her head gently, and told them that "they didn't know what *raison* they had to be thankful. They had great *raison*; for she'd been always a blessing to them; and now she'd be a blessing to another, to another home, close be their own, where they could see her iv'ry day and iv'ry hour, an' they choosed. Ah, it was indeed *raison* to be very thankful that they had. An' if they wasn't thankful, she'd go an' be married herself to Mac Garvin, (*he'd* been asking her) and then see 'f they would be thankful."

While they laughed at this, and at Mary's lively way of saying it, (for all she had tears in her eyes, thinking how she really did like him, the good, homely soul, all pitted up with small pox; but wouldn't leave Mrs. Phillips and Miss Doria for forty Mac Garvins) little Mary Walton came tripping in; for the Waltons lived close by. Their garden and Mrs. Phillips' joined.

She came in to eat breakfast with them, she said, dragging off bonnet and shawl, throwing them into a chair, and sending her friendly eyes one way and another.

There were joyful exclamations and kisses and thanks. Mrs. Phillips called her "a dear child!" and told her that *she* always knew just what one needed; at the same time that she drew Mary's

chair (which she herself had taken at once along with her to the table) close to her own.

Poor Irish Mary too was glad. "Miss Walton was a darl'n to come then! she'd bring dishes for the darl'n; she'd run down; and, in two minutes, she'd be up again with hot cakes for the darl'n! she would, indeed!" All on Mrs. Phillips and Miss Doria's account. She had lost her "sociable time;" but "that was nothin'," she said to herself, to put back the tears that kept coming to her eyes.

"No, indeed! that was nothing." And, by-the-by, that is something that our hard-working, cheerful-tempered Irish girls are often saying to themselves, to put the tears and the regrets back. And, the very next moment, we hear them humming in a nasal way, and clamping diligently in their heavy shoes, trying their best to let us see how willing and glad they are "to do for us."

This time the cheerful alacrity and abnegation were recompensed ten thousand fold, in Irish Mary's estimate, by their saying to her, when she came up with the steaming cakes, "That's a good Mary. Sit down now, and eat some of them, while they are hot and good;" and by her seeing, in the quick glance she threw round on them all, that they really did mean what they said; that they did really, out of their hearts, choose that she should come, delicate little Mary Walton and all, the darl'n!

Irish Mary was very happy, that morning; and for many and many a morning, thinking of it while she worked. She told Mac Garvin of it, the next time he came to ask her. She shook her head, saying, "No, Mac Garvin; not as larg as they need me, an' want me—my old mist-r-ress an' my young mist-r-ress. They're so good, so kind ter me, ye see!"

She was thankful then and afterward, however, that he said, in return, "I shall wait for ye, Ma-r-y. Ye will see that I shall; for I'm in no hurry, 'f I cannot have you. In no hurry."

"And so, Mary dear, you like him?" asked Doria, looking down into her empty cup, and moving her spoon about in it.

They still sat at table, although Irish Mary's hum and clomp had been going on a half hour down in the kitchen.

"Yes, I do. He's monstrous large; don't you think he is?"

"Pretty large."

"Yes; I was half afraid of him, some way, he seemed so monstrous large," she added, laughing. "He must have one of the best hearts in the world, I know," she continued, in a musing way, after a pause.

She had heard of his goodness to Dr. Wether-

green; had heard it from Caddy's grateful lips; and they had had tearful eyes, tearful tones in reciting and commenting; for, incidentally, they thought and spoke of it, how many there are in this world, how many there are in that one small city, who wait and grow faint and discouraged, as Dr. Wethergreen had done; and who have nowhere a good, rich cousin Ambrose, or any body, to come, and help, and encourage them.

CHAPTER II.

"THE season," so called, was over at Lake Win-nipiseogee, but the warmth and mellow beauty of a resplendent Indian summer-time lingered, day after day upon the scene. So the birds sang on the islands and on the shores, as if it were a new spring, sang and chatted, now that they had nothing else to do, and flitted, all day long, day after day. Jo Hendrick, a still artist, with dreamy, beautiful eyes and mouth, lingered; and was out all day long, going lazily from point to point in his tiny boat. So the odd, rich old bachelor, Marsh, of Boston, lingered. Or, in fact he had not been there long. He meant not to come until the flow of visitors was quite over. He wasn't going up there to hear young girls giggle, and see young coxcombs dangling. No! and he ground the muttered negative between his teeth. He was going up to see the autumn winds swing and toss the pines, and to hear them go soughing through the nights.

That bright Indian summer was bad for him. He hated it on the whole; or hated that so many people should come threading out of every boat, to enjoy it there where he was. Because, of all the people who met him there, or elsewhere, there were so few to like him, to understand how he wanted friends more, ten thousand times, than he wanted God, heaven, or anything; and yet, with his unlucky manners, could never get them. So he was only seen at meal-times coming in, eating a few hasty mouthfuls, and going out, always with the same frown about his brows, always with the same darkness on his bent features; and, late in the evening, he was seen moving slowly this way and that, in the bright moonlight.

Well, he was there, staying for the time to come, when only himself and the flying winds and clouds would be left, Hendrick was there enjoying himself; and, as has already been intimated, the "Lady of the Lake" never came across that she did not bring numbers great or small; most of whom had seen the lake in the legitimate summer-time, but who wanted to see how things looked then, when the skies, mountains and trees

had their royal garments on; and when they themselves, now that there was no more summer heat, were so strong, so ready for vivid enjoyment.

One day, early in the Indian summer, a tall, broad, richly (albeit, somewhat grotesquely) attired man, young and with the sunniest face in the world, said to a pretty little, fashionably dressed creature, who was taking timid steps over the plank at the landing, "Here, little Mary Walton! let me lead you." He took one of her baby-like hands into both of his, held it very close, bending a little toward her to say, "You're as timid as a hare, I see. So I shall see to taking care of you."

She did not speak, or look up. He felt, however, that her hand lay within his, as if there was its place, and that her step became instantly assured and free. He felt that she liked to be helped by him, even as he liked to help her; and this made her very dear to him.

He turned back to see to the rest. Caddy looked as delicate and as tranquil as a babe; and as lovely, in her light travelling dress. But she too needed help over the landing; and her fine-looking husband gave it tenderly, as if she were cherished "like the apple of his eye."

"As for our best Doria, she never needs help, or anything," said Ambrose, speaking heartily, and heartily going to her to assist her. But she was crossing with firm steps, with unconcerned looks. He did not, therefore, offer her his hand, or his arm. He merely kept by her, answered her smile with another, and said, "Always sufficient for yourself, dear Doria; always making your own quiet way."

Again Doria answered with one of her pleasant smiles; she was swallowing her tears, though, all the while; and saying, within herself, "Yes; always making my own way; and this is what I shall be doing to the end."

Ambrose, out of his quick sympathies, felt that the heart had less part than the face and the feet, in her wonderful self-reliance. He said so to her, in a few words, as they were coming up with the rest.

"And, if it is so?" asked she, with her eyes on his face.

"Why, if it is so, I shall see to it. I shall take care of you from this time."

"I shan't let you. You shall take care of little Mary Walton. It will trouble me if I see you taking the least pains on my account." Her eyes grew very earnest as she spoke.

"Taking pains—taking pains, your old phrase. And I've told you ten times, as many as that, that I don't take pains; that neither the doctor,

nor I, nor any man fit to come near so good, so dear a creature as you are—as you are, in spite of this piece of folly of yours—would ever feel that he is 'taking pains,' when he sees to you a little. He would feel—at least, I would, the doctor would, I know, and I have no doubt others would do the same—that, in doing you, perhaps, some small service, he was doing himself a great one. He would feel obliged to you for being a little more—why a little more willing to be seen to, a little."

They had come up with the rest; and, for the nonce, all had a part in contending with impracticable Doria; in trying to make her believe—as *they* most assuredly did—that she was the best creature anywhere about, and that it was her duty to let them, and all who offered and were worthy, to do something for her now and then.

"When I ask you! I will ask whenever I want help, or anything!" she said, laughingly, but with increasing color in her cheeks, from first to last, inclusive.

So that Ambrose and Dr. Joseph were half vexed. So that, in making a little ascent, they would both help her; would both leave Caddy to help Mary; and Mary, Caddy.

Doria cried about it after she got into her chamber; her solitary chamber now, for the first time since she was a child. She had shown herself very obstinate, she knew. She supposed they had all begun to think, and would think it more and more, that she was already, two years almost beforehand, an odd thing; an odd old maid. Perhaps they would come, in time, to lay it up against her; for she must go on seeing to herself. She had determined anew on the point before she came to the lake; that Dr. Joseph should be for his wife, Caddy, and Ambrose for his pretty little favorite, Mary; that both Dr. Joseph and Ambrose should see that she was abundantly sufficient unto herself. That dear, affectionate Caddy and Mary should see it too. And then they would go their ways and she hers, in a perfect freedom. She sighed many times, and many times had tears in her eyes, as she planned it. She moreover wished, that, here in our New England, as in Old England, and in all refined and enlightened Europe, lovers and pairs in the honeymoon, had their loves and comforts more in common with fathers and mothers, uncles and aunts, old maid sisters and old bachelor brothers, and with the little troops of nephews and nieces. She liked the New England fidelity of lover to lover, of the newly-made wife to husband, and of the newly-made husband to wife; but she wondered whether this were not possible; and compatible, at the same time, with

a less intense exclusiveness—especially in the lovers.

CHAPTER III.

"HALLO—hallo!" cried Ambrose, extending a hand to a gentleman who sprang up from the table to meet him.

Dr. Wethergreen knew him slightly it seemed. He shook hands with him and said, "How do you do, Mr. Brooks? glad to see you here."

"Where's Mrs. Brooks? Hasn't she been here?" asked Ambrose, seating Mary and Doria; seating Doria first.

"Yes; she has been here. She left this morning. She has gone to Dover to her family, for a week or so."

"She's coming back? Here, waiter! just shift the captain's dishes over here into our neighborhood; hey, Captain Brooks? wouldn't you like it? I want you here, you see, to help me take care of these girls. Miss Phillips, Captain Brooks—sister to Dr. Wethergreen's wife there"—Captain Brooks bowed to Caddy—"Miss Walton, Captain Brooks."

Yes; Captain Brooks made gallant, easy bows and compliments to them all. The waiter, as it happened, placed his dishes opposite Doria; Ambrose, therefore, seated himself, saying, "All right! all right!" opposite blushing little Mary Walton.

"Mrs. Brooks is coming back?" Ambrose again asked, in the midst of serving Mary; in the midst of smiling at the bashfulness on her part, that was so engaging to him.

"Yes; in the course of a week. Miss Phillips let me——"

Yes; Miss Phillips, otherwise our obstinate Doria, would let him do anything for her. For the Mrs. Brooks who left that morning, who would return, in the course of a week, was a good spirit, as it were, utterly exorcising "Doria's folly"—as they had all learned of Ambrose to call it—making it clear and pleasant as a summer morning between her and the fine-looking man across the table. She talked with him—she hadn't been at the table five minutes, before she found that he was one of those men with whom one talks, without premeditation, on and on; to whom one has more and more to say, the more one has said already. There was a good deal that was grave and solid in the expression of his face, in the tones of his voice, and in his general bearing. But he was very cheerful. His smile came very readily; and was very—why, very open, very—but then, no matter. Doria said so to herself when she began

an inward comment. We say so to ourselves and to our readers; for, did not Mrs. Brooks leave that morning? and would she not be back there, in the course of a week?

"Yes," Doria said to herself. "And I am so thankful there is a Mrs. Brooks somewhere to come back! When she comes back, she shall love me, and I will love her. I will sit with her and walk with her; and then the others" (she meant Dr. Joseph and Caddy, Ambrose and little Mary Walton) "can go in pairs as they please."

This was more and more in her thoughts, as the second and third and fourth days passed; as, each day, Captain Brooks attended to her with more and more care and delicacy; and evinced more and more a liking for talking with her upon the great political questions that concerned the nations, by the way, they talked; upon philosophy and the arts; as well as upon the commonest subjects; getting vivid interest out of them all. They would still talk about these things after Mrs. Brooks came, Doria promised herself; and with added interest, no doubt; for Mrs. Brooks must be an intelligent, noble creature to be the chosen of such a man; and, especially, after having been four years his bosom companion. She knew that she had been his companion four years; for, the day her party came, she heard him say to one who spoke of a certain date, "It was four years ago, sir. I remember it; for it happened the day I was married."

An expression as if of subdued sorrow, or at least of regret, stole upon his features as he spoke, taking the place of the open smile, the cheerfulness that ordinarily was, as it were, a light round about him. Doria saw it. And then, and when she thought of it afterward, she knew that it came out of his love for the wife who was away, out of his want of her; and her respect for him, her liking for him was augmented a hundred fold, thinking of it. She wished, however, more and more, that she could know what kind of an eye Mrs. Brooks had—whether genial and full of light and warmth like her husband's, or close and hard like poor Mr. Marsh's—what kind of a manner, what kind of a heart; whether frank and inviting, or cold and repulsive like an iceberg. Hu—she shuddered, on the whole, thinking of the possible repulsive woman on one side of her, and of a possible iceberg on the other, close; hemming her close in an iceberg's veritable shape, perhaps; perhaps having no form whatever, but an essence of loneliness and apathy.

"Doria! Doria! darling Doria," half said and half sang two merry voices, before they were

fairly within her chamber. "We've come after you! We want to sail, you see; it is so beautiful out."

"Yes, my dear ones, I will come."

"Aren't you well, Doria, *best* Doria?" Little Mary Walton had both arms about her waist, and was looking eagerly in her face.

"Perfectly, darling."

"But somehow your voice has a sound, a something new in it, that makes me reproach myself for being so—so happy. For I am oh, so happy, Doria!" clinging closer to her. "It is so beautiful here!" She still held Doria; but with loosened embrace, and her beautiful eyes were turned through a window to the lake and the glowing woods. Doria kissed her, and, out of a full heart, called her "A dear little girl."

"And Caddy is a dear Caddy!" she added, drawing her sister close to her, close to the window where they could see the little white sails, on one part of the lake, and on another, in the bright light and in the deep shade. They stood there looking out, talking about how beautiful the earth is, and how worthy the human heart should be, until they heard a tap on the door, and Dr. Joseph saying, "Are you ready, girls?"

"We are waiting," he added, when the door was opened to him. He smiled and reached out his hand for Caddy.

Caddy and Mary both sprang forward; Mary knew that, when she came below, a smile would be ready for her too, and a hand reached out. Doria stood still, with a hand on the door-knob, and asked, "Who are 'we,' brother Joseph? who will go with us?"

"Who *should* 'we' be, sister Doria, but Caddy and I," again smiling on Caddy, "cousin Ambrose and little Mary here, your good self and Captain Brooks?"

"Yes; well," drawing back a little, "I think I won't go. I want to look the papers over. See! they lie there, a whole pile of them, that I have hardly touched."

"You shan't!" Caddy and Mary both said, with their arms and their hands hold of her, bringing her. They both had tears in their eyes too, stirred by this something new, that Mary spoke of in Doria's voice.

Dr. Joseph did not say anything; but he looked with steady, very friendly eyes into her face, took her hand, drew it through his arm and led her down on one side, and his wife—congratulating herself, congratulating them all that they had got Doria—on the other. Doria did not congratulate herself at all, it seemed. She spoke often; was kind toward them all; but her eyes,

when they rested on one, in speaking, had the same "something new," something very grave and quiet in them, that was in her tones; so that the best side of the path was given to her on the way to the boat; and the best seat in the boat; and Caddy wrapped her own shawl around her with very slow moving, affectionate hands.

CHAPTER IV.

THEY came back toward the shore in the sober twilight. Ambrose was helping Mary forward in the boat, and Captain Brooks Doria, when Ambrose said, looking back to Doria, "What will you do, Doria, when Mrs. Brooks comes? She'll be here now in a day or two. I'm thinking you'll miss his right hand not a little when she comes."

Mary tapped his arm nervously with her finger the instant he began to speak. But he went on; and Mary, then and afterward, kept on wondering what made him, who was always so considerate, so quick to perceive what it was best to do, say that; *just* that, and at just that time, when poor, dear Doria already had that something new, and, as she felt, regretful in her thoughts.

Doria bore it well enough, however. She kept her quiet manner, her quiet smile, (the color came a little though.) She brought her other hand up, laid it an instant on his arm, as she said, "I shall be glad when she comes. For I can still have *this* arm, can't I, Captain Brooks? And she can have the other. There is plenty of room for us both, isn't there?"

Captain Brooks had the slightest look in the world of feeling puzzled by the question; of doubting with himself whether, indeed, there would be any room left for Doria, after Mrs. Brooks returned. He hesitated in replying—"Plenty of room there must be for Miss Phillips—if——"

"Yes," quickly interposed Doria. "And then there is your left arm, Ambrose," bowing slightly to him and smiling, "and brother Joseph's left arm. So that, on the whole, nobody has so many arms, and such good arms at their service as I. And if it were otherwise," she added, thoughtfully, after a pause, "if there was not one arm at my service, I could make my own way, as so many others do."

She tried to smile in saying this; tried to control her voice perfectly; but it is doubtful whether she succeeded; for they were all very still as they moved forward; and Doria was sure that she heard her companion sigh; that she felt his arm tightening its pressure slightly upon her own. This caused her to instantly rally herself,

and proceeded, forthwith to rally the rest, with a project that instant conceived, she told them, of asking poor, cross Mr. Marsh if he would walk with them, and let her have *his* right arm in emergencies."

"He'll snarl at you," said little Mary Walton. "He did yesterday to that funny Mrs. Dow. Ha! She told as she was going where he stood with his elbow on Shakspeare's head, pulling a yellow leaf to pieces, to make herself agreeable to him. So she went with all the courage she could muster; but she was as afraid of him," laughing, "as she would have been of a polar bear; and she went edging along, and with such a curious look in her face! When she got up to him, she didn't know, for the life of her, what to say; and so she asked him whether he liked children! What do you suppose," she added, with some pretty wonder in her eyes, "made her say that? to him?"

They all laughed.

"Well, he just growled at her; and she came away, looking as if she were altogether conscious of having failed to make herself agreeable. He'll do the same by you, Doria, if you go near him to speak to him. I hope we all 'may be there to see,' don't you, Mr. Ambrose?" looking with a bashful air away up to his eyes.

Yes. But then, little Mary, Mr. Ambrose didn't believe in Mr. Marsh's being a polar bear; although he had no doubt he might be brought into a semblance of one, or of almost any other sort of creature, according to one's estimate of him, and to the character of one's approach. For his life was clearly an impersonal kind of life. His soul might be as fair as a babe's, and supplied with untold resources of thrift and power, and of a divine way of living; but overlooking these home advantages, he would go everywhere else but to his own soul, and grope and stumble, strain his eyes and stretch his hands—for power; for something, for anything that would set him at ease on all sides. So he was constantly disappointed and annoyed. People never understood him; never made use of delicacy and kindness in approaching him, as in approaching another. He was an ill-used man; an angry man very often, and a lonely man at all times; for, if he had not friends and friendly appreciation, he had nothing.

Both Doria and Ambrose understood that this was his character and feeling. The rest demurred, save Captain Brooks, who walked with his eyes on the ground, and seemed not to attend to what they were saying.

"I am sure we are right, Doria, and they are wrong, this little thing down here," (meaning

Mary Walton) "and all. We'll convince them, won't we? we'll take him in hand."

Fond as ever good Ambrose was of taking things into his hands. Only there was this agreeable change in him—while the old muscular force was a good deal diminished, in part by the ardors of his last "campaign" at gold-seeking, in part through the induction of his new habits of leisure and social recreation, the old nervous force was a good deal augmented; so that now his hands easily let go the mattoe and the spade and the speculative strife in mammon, at the same time that his mind went eagerly forth, back and forth, amongst books and men. He was already hold of a little company of terms of science, of art, of philosophy, terms feebly understood, yet always on our tongues, as if their exact force and meaning were clear to us, like the *a b c's*. He was tumbling the books over, great and small, and tumbling his own conceptions over to make out definitely what art is, and what science is; definitely what art and science do, what their mission is; and how, by what laws and methods they fill it. He asked Doria one morning, (it was the next morning after the sail) with Webster's dictionary in his hands, what idea she had of art; what she conceived art to be; what relationship she saw between art and science.

Yes, indeed! Doria could tell him. Why art—why art was—oh, indeed, she did not know *what* art was. She only knew that, to her, art was a very tall, very beautiful female, with loose, trailing drapery, with loose looks, Grecian head and a laurel wreath. Science too was tall, with firmer contour than art, with a Minerva-sort of helmet on her head, and a rule and square in her hand; in one hand; the other lay on a pedestal.

Little Mary Walton was delighted. Those were precisely her ideas of art and science. Captain Brooks, Dr. Joseph and Caddy were a little apart sitting with the Dows and others; sometimes talking with them, sometimes attending to what Ambrose and Doria were saying. Capt. Brooks, although he did not turn his head that way at all, seemed as if he were altogether listening to what they said; for they in his immediate neighborhood must often speak to him the second time, before they could get his attention to what they were saying.

"Poor, cross Mr. Marsh," as Doria always called him, stood apart from all others, with his elbow on a corner of the mantel-piece, mechanically opening and shutting his tooth-pick, listening to Ambrose when he spoke, and to Doria when she spoke; looking at them steadily, that he might hear them above the snapping of the

cheerful fire, above the hum of all other voices. For it was a frosty morning, and all in the house were congregated in the parlor where the open fire blazed and crackled.

Doria looked up to Mr. Marsh once, when she was trying to make out what art was, he instantly withdrew his eyes and resumed the opening and shutting of his tooth-pick. She looked up again—instinctively; for she felt that he listened to them with interest that he strove to conceal—looked up, with a steady, clear expression, and this time he did not turn his eyes; this time he still listened. And as he listened, with his eyes on Doria's, his brow opened a little, and it seemed to Doria that light came into his features. Pretty soon, when they were all laughing at Doria's art in such long skirts, and Doria's silence with the ugly helmet on her stiff head, he laughed too, almost as heartily as any one. Ambrose beckoned him over with his finger, and he came; carrying himself rather stiffly at first; but soon, as he talked with them, he was thoroughly at ease and animated; for he knew more than they all; not only of art and of science, but of whatever abstract term. Ambrose dragged in to be looked over and sifted.

But "poor Mr. Marsh!" said Doria, still, when she looked upon his new complacency. For she reflected that, unlike the steadfastness of that which is purely, or chiefly self-desired, as his came with the word, the glance of another, so with a counter word and glance, it would all vanish and leave it oh, so dark, so dead, within his brain and within his heart! She felt that what he needed was a consciousness of God, a hope and frequent thought of the bright land, heaven, where his inward struggle and pain would be over, and his idol-love and service. She felt that she too needed it; for she too forgot God and heaven so often, and bowed down to the earth and the earth-born! Like the Magdalen (as one sees the best Magdalens in the arts) she

bowed herself, disciplining her heart and begging for heavenly strength, heavenly purity; so that God might be in her heart, finding it a fit temple.

Mr. Marsh and Ambrose still talked of their "personalities" and their "impersonalities," their "subjectives" and their "objectives," little Mary Walton sitting close by to turn over the dictionary for them. Dr. Joseph, Caddy, the Dows and Captain Brooks, still—or all but Capt. Brooks—talked and listened and looked into the fire by turns. Captain Brooks was standing by a table, just back of Doria and her great arm-chair. He was turning over the books, it seemed, but with no very strong indications of interest. When Doria turned her head at the sound of the rustling leaves, he came a little nearer, saying something about it, that the sun was warm that day; that by noon it would be finer and warmer on the lake than they found it yesterday. And then would she like to go out?

She thought she would not go out that day, she replied, turning slightly toward him, but without raising her eyes. She had letters to write when it was warm enough in her chamber. She presumed it was warm enough then. She would go then. And she gathered up handkerchief, shawl and newspaper to go.

He was at the door to open it for her. At the door she met his glance, when she would acknowledge his courtesy; and there was something in it that she had never before seen—or felt; for it was rather a feeling than a sight—in any other glance, something that ran through her being, for an instant, like the thrilling breath of the early spring, rendering her very calm and strong, very happy.

"Don't write letters all day," said he, his eyes following her to the foot of the stairs.

She smiled, bowed her parting, and was over the stairs out of his sight.

(TO BE CONCLUDED.)

'DOROTHY.'

BY JEAN SCOFIELD.

"ONCE for all, I tell you, Dorothy, I will have no more such doings. I have brought up my daughters decently, and I expect them to marry decently. 'Lisha Redding is no husband for any modest girl. I take shame to myself, that a daughter of mine was ever seen in his company; and I forbade you to speak to him, you know very well, miss; yet here he is, writing letters to you, in the very teeth of my commands."

"Can I help it, if people write to me, mother? 'Lisha Redding never had any letters from me."

"Well, well! But he never sent this letter, without some encouragement, I'll be bound—smuggling it into the house, as a thief might, too. Your levity will ruin you yet, and break my heart, Dorothy Dawn. Letters, indeed!"

Of all her seven daughters, Mistress Dawn, in spite of these severe words, felt most pride in this, the youngest; and that in spite of Dorothy being a wild, fun-loving, gay vixen, who had given her mother more trouble than all the others put together. Four of them had wedded well and prudently; and of discreet Miss Annie there was no fear; but what was to be hoped for, from this unsatisfactory Dorothy? True, she was so charming, that she had been the object of admiration and detraction enough to turn the heads of a dozen girls; but then, also, she was so perverse, that she had been capable of laughing in the respectable face of the great Squire Torrence, when he solemnly proposed to make her his fourth wife; and so reckless as to have capped the climax of her follies, by accepting marked attentions from 'Lisha Redding. It did not mend matters, that the good mother had herself thought 'Lisha an excellent match, six months ago, before all the discreditable tales about him, that were electrifying the gossips, had begun to circulate; she was none the less indignant with Dorothy now; and all the more indignant with 'Lisha for his presumption, because his bad conduct had deprived her of an eligible son-in-law.

"Now, do you hear?" said Mistress Dawn, sternly, when Dorothy remained silent.

"Yes, mother," said Dorothy, like a lamb.

"I hope you will heed, then. You had better go, now, and help your sister; you know your uncle never likes his supper to be behindhand."

"Very well," said Miss Dorothy, and went demurely away.

Girls of that day were not so emancipated as they are at present, and Dorothy had been brought up to be dutiful; so the spark under her downcast lashes was not suffered to blaze out, and her lips remained tightly closed over the rebellious speeches thrilling on the end of her sharp little tongue. Was it her fault that 'Lisha Redding had turned out ill? Her fault, that he had chosen to send her a note? And was it consistent of her mother, and uncle Harwood, and Annie, and the relatives generally, who had been disposed to congratulate her so short a time ago, to be solemnly vexed with her now, for what she could not help? Did they really think Dorothy the girl to take up with a man who had forfeited her respect? And had anybody more reason to hate him than she had, who had to bear—though she did it gallantly, with a laugh and a jest—the mortifying commiseration of her young companions, who had lately envied her her college-bred lover, with his dashing ways and good looks and prospects? As for going to meet him, she'd die first. With thoughts like these in her head, and incipient rebellion in her heart, Dorothy betook herself to her sister, as her mother had ordered.

Annie was in the kitchen, industriously superintending the preparations for the supper.

"I wish," said Annie, "that uncle Harwood had told us more about this young gentleman he's so taken with, and is going to bring here, to-day: it's hard guessing what will suit somebody you never saw: folks differ so."

"I don't care whether he's suited or not," Dorothy said, tartly. "I suppose he's some mouldy, spectacled, cross old lawyer."

"Uncle called him a young man."

"Yes; he would call anybody, under sixty, young. Oh, dear! I wish they had chosen some other time to visit us. I don't feel hospitable at all. But mother has sent me here, to know if I can help you."

"I wish you'd run into the orchard, then, and get me some apples," said practical Annie. "You can do that, whether you feel hospitable or not."

"I will just put on my hat, Annie," answered Dorothy, cheerfully; and, in a moment, she reappeared, looking prettier than ever.

We cannot help describing her, she made such a charming picture. She was already dressed for their guests, and wore a simple white gown,

with a broad sash, her abundant hair falling in curls on her shoulders. Her hat was one of the broad leghorns, called "flats," so fashionable at that time; and beneath it, her great, dark eyes looked out, half mirthful, half beseeching.

Dorothy had scarcely reached the orchard, before she heard a familiar voice.

"Dorothy," it said, a little doubtfully.

Dorothy, with a great start, turned hastily around, and confronted 'Lisha Redding.

"Dorothy, won't you speak to me?" said he, throwing all the appealing eloquence he could command, into his voice and glance.

Now, if Dorothy's ears had not been still tingling with the uncalled-for reproaches of Mistress Dawn's lecture, she would undoubtedly have turned her back upon 'Lisha, then and there, and walked away, treating him to the silent contempt it is certain he richly deserved; even as it was, she hurried on.

"I can't talk to you, Mr. Redding," she said.

"Now, Dorothy, is this fair? We were all but engaged the other day—"

"All but!" said saucy Dorothy, tossing her head.

"You know, I never cared a straw," he urged, following her, "for anybody but you; yet, you would not speak to me, when I met you, last Sunday. I wrote to you—"

"Mother tore the letter into a thousand pieces, not an hour ago," interrupted Dorothy.

"And I've been hanging about here all the afternoon, trying to get a glimpse of you. Surely, you won't go away, without listening to a word?"

"I hear too many words said about you," said Dorothy, gravely. "I can't listen. Mother might turn me out of doors for it. Good-by, Mr. Redding."

"Not good-by, nor Mr. Redding, either," said the lover, pleadingly; and he laid a detaining hand upon her arm. "Dear Dorothy, don't throw me over like this. I've not deserved it."

"I needn't repeat what is in everybody's mouth, need I?" Dorothy said, with some of Mistress Dawn's spirit mounting into her dark eyes. How dared 'Lisha, after all that had happened, speak as if he had any claim upon her? It was an insult; she did not hold herself so cheaply. But his hand was still on her arm.

"Now, do you condemn me on the authority of a pack of old women's stories, Dorothy, and not even allow me to defend myself?" he said, insinuatingly. "I did not think you were such a girl as that. Is it fair, I ask you? Won't you even hear what I have to say for myself?"

Mr. Redding had a most plausible tongue of his own, and was so well aware by experience of

its power, that he made no doubt of Dorothy's relenting towards him, could he only persuade her to grant this modest request, and hear what he had to say for himself. He did not know how much girlish vanity, and the instincts of the coquette, had had to do with her old, apparent liking for him; nor how decidedly contempt and wounded pride had driven out that liking; nor with what dangerous thorns this pretty, wilful rosebud he mistakenly coveted, was set.

"I don't know of anything good you could say for yourself, that would be likely to be true," Dorothy retorted.

"Dorothy, I beg and entreat you not to be so unmerciful. Suppose I am as bad as you think I am," suggested the artful young man, "what harm will it do you to listen to me for five minutes? If you must go, now, promise, at least, to let me see you somewhere—or to let me write to you. Dorothy, dear Dorothy, you won't be unkind enough to refuse me this one little request? I'll do something desperate, if you do—I swear I will."

A wicked thought flashed into Dorothy's head. "Well, perhaps it would be unkind," she said, slowly; and, as it seemed, reluctantly. "But I can't wait to hear any of your explanations, to-day, 'Lisha.'"

"Shall I write?"

"No, no. It would not be of the slightest use. I told you what happened to your letter."

"Will you meet me here in the orchard, then? To-morrow—any time, only soon?"

"What a very simple fly you must take me for—you great, stupid spider!" was Miss Dorothy's reflection; but she said:

"No; that would be worse than letter-writing. No, 'Lisha; if you really want to see me, and if you can say anything that will give me a better opinion of you—I own I don't like to think ill of an old friend—I'll tell you what you must do. Come, to-night, after all the lights are out, and knock on the parlor window, under the lilac bushes. But as uncle Harwood, and a friend of his from New York, are going to spend the night with us, don't come too early—and we can talk through the window. I know I'm a fool, but—"

"You are an angel!" cried the enraptured 'Lisha.

But Dorothy tripped away, on the instant, and heard no more. She laughed aloud, more than once, as she went; as amazed at 'Lisha's credulity, as he was at his unhopèd-for success with her.

"And so her airs of scorn were all put on. I might have guessed it; and I'll have her yet, in spite of the old woman," was 'Lisha's exultant conclusion.

It was well that Dorothy had warned him

against keeping his appointment too early. There was a great deal of laughter and lively chat, under Mistress Dawn's homely roof, that evening, and it was prolonged to the very verge of midnight. Poor 'Lisha, prowling restlessly about in the dark, moonless, summer night, and waiting for the lights to be extinguished, could hear the voices and the laughter, and was none the merrier for it. Was she thinking about him, he wondered? And who was that anonymous friend of Judge Harwood's? Some snuffy old lawyer, like himself, probably; but yet—but yet—some uneasy presentiment made 'Lisha long for the peep it was impossible to obtain, at the group in the sitting-room. His vigil might not have been rendered more agreeable, by a sight of Dorothy's blooming face, as she sat with downcast eyelashes, intent on a piece of bright-colored patchwork, and innocently oblivious to the frequent glances wandering her way, from the pair of grave, dark eyes opposite—eyes that did not belong to a snuffy old lawyer, but to a rather elegant-looking young one.

It seemed an age, to 'Lisha, before that sitting-room grew dark and silent; before the scattered household lights one by one disappeared; another age, before he could venture to steal nearer to the designated parlor window, staring blankly upon him, between its setting of lilac boughs. Somewhere inside, the tall clock from over seas sonorously struck "one," as he approached. He had certainly waited as long as prudence demanded; everybody must be asleep by this time; besides, the moon would be up soon, and Mistress Dawn's eyes were of the sharpest. He knocked gently at the window.

There was no response. Again he knocked—louder, and with a more impatient hand; and listened. It was absolutely silent within, except for the slow ticking of the clock. The window was slightly raised already. 'Lisha took the liberty of pushing it up as high as it would go, and looked in. Through the open door opposite, he could see the sitting-room. There was just light enough for eyes, grown accustomed to the outside gloom, to discern the outlines of objects by: conspicuous, near the window, by the gleam of its white draperies, stood the great state bed. 'Lisha heard a gentle sound of breathing.

"Confound it! I suppose the girl grew tired of waiting, and has lain down and fallen asleep; couldn't she keep awake five minutes?" reflected 'Lisha, disgusted. He knew Dorothy was not sentimental; but this want of consideration was a little too irritating. Extending his arm through the window, he seized the edge of the nearest pillow, and gave it a sudden shake.

"What the deuce is that?" was the ejaculation that saluted his astonished ears, in tones quite unlike Dorothy's musical treble; and 'Lisha found himself grasped by a muscular arm, evidently with hostile intentions. The state bed was occupied, as Dorothy had been perfectly aware it would be, by the young lawyer from New York, who now started up to defend, as he supposed, the property of his entertainers from burglarious hands. It was not without difficulty that 'Lisha wrenched himself loose from this unexpected assailant, and made good his escape, hearing, as he stumbled, in his haste, over Mistress Dawn's rose-bushes and sage-beds—or was it fancy?—the sound of a stifled laugh, somewhere in the upper regions of the house, floating maliciously after him. No, it was not fancy; a sudden light flashed upon the young man's mind. He stopped, to stamp on the ground, in his rage.

"I'll pay you back this little trick, with interest, some day, Mistress Dorothy!" he cried. "You are not done with 'Lisha Redding yet, I promise you."

What Dorothy could not hear, did not trouble her; but she was a little startled, upon finding that her joke might have ended seriously. "I had my pistols with me," Walter Berry incidentally remarked, when the adventure of the night was being discussed, next day, at the breakfast-table. Mistress Dawn considered the presence of guests in her house, that night, to have been quite a providence; being firmly convinced that, had it had no tenant, her best bed, with all its furnishings, would have gone out of the window, into darkness, never to return. Miss Annie listened, with terror, to the judge's stories about buglars; but was not of her mother's, or his opinion, for all that; to her thinking, there was something mysterious, if not supernatural, about the affair: she hoped it was not a "warning" of approaching calamity. Which opinion, the skeptical old judge laughed at, as he did at most things: pool-pooed Walter's pistols, and said a stout cudgel was more to the purpose, as a weapon of defence: "and you must provide yourself with one, Molly, and a husband to manage it, for you'll be all alone when the girls leave you," the judge said, to his sister, pinching Dorothy's cheek. Dorothy was very quiet, that morning. So was Walter Berry, but it appeared to be his natural manner. Certainly, as Miss Annie afterward remarked, he was no great talker, for a lawyer; and, the evening before, she had even thought him a little absent-minded, at times, as studious people so often are. Perhaps, her uncle slyly hinted, he might

have been livelier, if Dorothy had not happened to be his *vis-à-vis*.

That was not the judge's last opportunity to tease, nor was it Walter Berry's last visit. He came again and again, upon one pretext or other; and, at last, unblushingly, without any excuse. By that time, 'Lisha Redding, and the scandals connected with him, had ceased to be spoken about: for he had then been absent some months from the neighborhood, nobody knew exactly where. There were rumors of his having been seen in New York, in wild company; of his having gone to sea; but nothing was positively known, and his proud family remained sternly silent about him. Perhaps, Dorothy sometimes thought of him, with a little curiosity; perhaps, with a little vague remorse; though she was certainly not to blame, as some people said, for 'Lisha's throwing himself away, since he had been as bad as he could be, before she had ever seen him; only, the good neighbors had not then found him out: but it was not Dorothy's way to indulge much in useless regrets. Besides, it was such an interesting amusement to torment Walter Berry, that it helped to put the former victim out of her head. Mistress Dawn grumbled more than ever; Annie remonstrated mildly with her sister, and showed her compassion for the young man by preparing miracles of biscuit and sponge-cake for his consolation, when his lady-love was more wayward than usual. For everybody saw, with everybody's usual clear-sightedness, the object of Mr. Berry's increasingly frequent visits; everybody, of course, except Dorothy, who continued to express her wonder that a young lawyer could afford to spend so much time away from his office; and was Annie's sponge-cake, or her own currant wine, the attraction, she would like to know? And *wasn't* he awkward, and queer, and silent? And, for her part, she couldn't understand uncle Harwood's preference for him.

Poor Walter Berry groaned under her tyranny, but could not emancipate himself, often and often as he vowed to do it; and Dorothy continued to be charming and tantalizing, friendly and frozen, by turns, and would say neither "Yes" nor "No," to the honest young fellow who adored her, until—but that is what I am about to relate.

One bright, midwinter afternoon, Mistress Dawn and Annie had gone out to take tea at a friendly neighbor's, and Dorothy was alone. Suddenly, she heard the sound of horses' feet and sleigh runners crunching the crisp snow outside. A loud knock followed; and, instead of the peep she was about to risk from the win-

dow, she cast a hurried glance at her own pretty head and shoulders in the high mirror.

"It can't be Walter—I know it can't," said Dorothy, contradicting some unspoken assertion, and suppressing a slight flutter; then she demurely opened the door. Opened it, to be caught up instantly in a pair of strong arms, and lifted into the waiting sleigh; and before Dorothy had recovered her breath, or had time to ask what this amazing proceeding might mean, the horses had plunged forward, at a word and a blow from their driver, and the sleigh was dashing out into the highway, and turning southward.

"'Lisha Redding, how dare you?" cried indignant Dorothy, turning upon her captor with flashing eyes and fury cheeks. But 'Lisha only replied by a loud laugh, and ordered the driver to hasten. Then he threw a heavy cloak around the girl.

"You'll need it," he said, coolly. "We are going to New York, to-night, Dorothy; and it's a long ride in the cold. I have not forgotten you, you see."

"Let me out of this sleigh, this minute," commanded Dorothy, struggling violently, but struggling in vain: 'Lisha's grasp on her arm was like iron.

"Don't; you'll only hurt yourself," he said; and Dorothy, angrier and more frightened every minute, was fain to desist. Frightened she was, but not yet so frightened as angry; it was insulting and outrageous to be dragged from her home in that summary manner. But she could not yet believe that the adventure was to end seriously: it was broad daylight; in her own neighborhood; the houses and the people for miles about were familiar to her. No; it was only a bad joke of 'Lisha's—a device to match her silly trick upon him. So she held her peace, and expected deliverance.

But it soon began to be seen that Mr. 'Lisha's joke, if joke it were, was a rather grim one. As they approached the nearest house, Dorothy's captor suddenly enveloped her face in the cape of the great cloak, so closely that she could not utter a sound, and only partially released her again when they were so far out of hearing that to scream would be useless. In like manner, house after house was passed, a *detour* being made to avoid the village. Dorothy's wrath gradually became downright terror; she expostulated, threatened, stormed, and, at last, cried and coaxed; but the only answer was a mocking laugh, more insulting and alarming than any words would have been. Then she appealed to the driver, with no better success; and steadily, and at a tremendous rate, they rushed on.

"What *will* mother say?" cried poor Dorothy, at last, sobbing aloud; and then 'Lisha spoke out, with a deep enjoyment of his own wickedness, that was wonderful to see.

"She will think you have run away with me," he said. "So will everybody else; so will that nice young gentleman from New York. None of them will ever know any better, Dorothy, because to-morrow we shall be out at sea, in a Spanish ship, bound for—no matter where; but this is the last of Westchester County."

"Miserable wretch!" said Dorothy, flaming up into wrath and courage once more.

"Probably. You may call me all the hard names you like, my dear. I don't mind. Aha! you fooled me finely once, didn't you, Dorothy? It's my turn now."

Dorothy made no answer, shed no more tears; she remained quiet, and thought intensely. Was there *no* escape? Alas! none whatever. For the night crept ominously down, and her captor's vigilance never slackened. Her heart sank; remorseful thoughts of home crowded upon her: thoughts of how she had not been the good, steady girl she might have been, like Annie, whom certainly nobody had ever dreamed of running away with; of how she had teased poor Walter—and Dorothy grew desperate. She *would* escape. Surely, Heaven was merciful; and were these the times when a brave-hearted girl, with her wits about her, could be carried off from her home and friends, against her will, like this? 'Lisha must be mad, as well as reckless. She determined to keep quiet, until he should be off his guard, and then make a fierce effort for liberty. Some inn, some farmhouse, some passing traveler, would surely afford her the opportunity. But the sleigh dashed on and on; the dusk deepened; night had come; and now all the houses were closed; and the much-traveled highway stretched forward, between walls of deep-drifted snow, solitary as a desert, for once. Dorothy watched and waited.

Suddenly, noiselessly, as the sleigh glided

along at a slackened pace, in the shadow of a high, pine-covered bank, from behind this bank, at a few rods' distance, a huge, black object shot out. Dorothy knew it at once. It was the mail coach, bound northward, coming upon them, around a sharp turn of the road. With a cry, that roused shrill, answering echoes among the black shadows of the pines, she sprang like a flash from the sleigh, and fell in the very path of the advancing horses. The hot breath of the animals touched her, as their startled driver with difficulty reined them in; and voices from half-a-dozen heads, thrust out of the windows, called out, to know what was the matter.

"Drive on, drive on!" 'Lisha shouted back, furiously endeavoring to stifle the girl's screams, and drag her again into the sleigh. "I'll take care of her; it's only a poor, crazy girl."

"I am not! I am not!" Dorothy cried. "Help me, for the love of heaven—"

Help was there. Two gentlemen had leaped from the coach, and while the words of Dorothy's appeal were still on her lips, she found herself clasped in her uncle's arms, while 'Lisha went reeling into the nearest snow-drift, before a blow he had been too much excited to parry. For among the passengers, on that fortunate coach, were Judge Harwood and Walter Berry; and the rescued one was taken home in triumph to her mother, and to a famous scolding, because the adventure was likely to furnish gossip to the whole country-side for a month: which it did.

The judge was anxious to lodge 'Lisha in the county jail; but yielded to Dorothy's entreaties, and left him; and the last glimpse we have of the unlucky lover, he is seen struggling out of a snow-drift, frantic with black and baffled passions—not an object description cares to linger upon.

As for Dorothy, it is on record, that she was known in later years as a discreet and notable matron, and that she wrote her name Dorothy Berry; so it is but fair to suppose that she took the lesson of that midwinter ride to heart, and profited by it.

DR. WETHERGREEN'S PRACTICE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SUSY L——'S DIARY."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 34.

CHAPTER V.

THE next morning, when Ambrose was at Dr. Joseph's room, talking and tearing a bit of newspaper to pieces mechanically, as he talked, he stopped suddenly in the midst of something that he was saying, ran his eyes over the paper he held, and then read aloud to Joseph—"Lost. On Tuesday, 27th ult., a female canary bird, of delicate color, with white about her breast and wings. She is an intelligent bird; sings almost constantly, and answers to the names 'Birdy' and 'Charly.' The bird is a favorite. Any one who will restore her to her owner, No. 96 Lowell street, will be very gratefully rewarded."

Dr. Joseph's face had been a thoughtful one all the morning; for his mind was on the painful last night's scene. Ambrose, when he looked up, could not see much change in his face. The mouth was a little sadder, that was all. For the rest, he had his eyes fixed on birdy, who was the busiest thing alive now, bathing and shaking her wings.

"Too outrageous bad! ain't it, cousin Jo?"

"Yes; I'm sorry. I can spare her," looking back into Ambrose's face. "That poor fellow could spare his child, last night, and be a man. Pity if I can't spare a bird I've had so short a time; but, I tell you, Nat, it will make my heart ache. It does now, thinking of it. For I sit here alone and wait so much, you know! I had grown so tired of it before birdy came! She, the darling! see her, Nat! see how she exults in the bath! she has made it so much easier for me to wait and to hope."

"Well, you just wait. We'll walk around to-night, when it is cooler, and see how things look at No. 96. We'll see if they look as if there was a lack of comforts there. If they do, why then we'll give up the bird, won't we? If they don't, I have thought of a way to fix matters, so that the owner of the bird and you shall both be content. What say you to this, old fellow?" clapping one hand on Joseph's shoulder, at the same time, that, with the other, he took hold of the visor of his cap to go.

"What does birdy say?" asked Dr. Joseph.

Birdy went up to her perch out of the bath,

looked over to her master's face, said, "Eh?—eh?" and kept her wings fluttering, and her bill going amongst the feathers, in a bustling way, as if she meant to signify to Joseph and to all concerned, that she could by no means stop to go round to No. 96; that she had altogether too much to do where she was; and so intended to stay.

The doctor and Ambrose both laughed at her. The doctor called her "darling!" Ambrose said, "You're a knowing little thing!" and started toward the door. "I'm going in to French's to smoke and eat some oysters;" with his hand on the door-knob, and coloring a little in the neighborhood of the sorts of his hair. The color of the rest of his good-natured face could hardly be increased by any amount of blushing whatever. "You'd better go too."

"No."

"No! don't you ever smoke yet?"

"No."

"I would raise your spirits; I can tell you that."

"They'd fall again though. Can't you tell me that too?"

"Well, I can. But come and eat some oysters."

"No, cousin Nat."

"No? who ever saw such a fellow? did ever you, my bird!"

"Eh," said birdy. "Eh; eh."

"She means 'yes,'" laughed Joseph. "She does the same herself. She never goes to French's. She stays here, eats her seed and cuttle-bone and drinks her water."

"And what do you do?" dropping the door-handle. "How do you live? on bread and coffee and nothing else, only a little butter, perhaps?"

"Chiefly. Now and then, when I can afford it, and order it, my landlady sends up, for my dinner, a slice of meat, or fish, and a potato, with some gravy, and brown bread. I used to have something of the kind every day, when I first came; when my expectations were up; and often some delicate bits with my breakfast and tea. I don't miss it, Nat," seeing that his cousin had an unspeakable amount of dole in his looks. "I am just as well, even better without it. I am perfectly content so far as my living is concerned."

I want business; want something to do; that is all I want."

"And that'll come some time, if you can stand it, poor fellow. I ain't going in to French's," coming to sit by the table with his cap on. "Where—where's your pen? Yes, I see. I'm going to write to mother and Nan. Or, no I ain't!" wiping the pen he had already dipped into the ink. "I shall go to-morrow, by a late train to see 'em. I shall go out now and be looking about. Suppose you go with me. Suppose we go now and see how things look at No. 96. And then I can be pushing matters for the rest of the day. What say, old fellow?"

The "old fellow" said he would go; whistled softly a strain or two of "The last Rose of Summer," looked at birdy and went out.

No. 96 was a very pretty house with gable-windows above, and bay-windows below; with terraces covered heavily with dark green grass and dotted with little clumps of box, and large clumps of flowering shrubs. The yard was large and so was the garden. Through the clear panes of the bay-windows they saw green leaves, scarlet and white flowers, and ladies in light dresses sitting. They looked for the name on the door and found that it was Cunningham, "J. F. Cunningham." They looked for an empty bird-cage hanging; but found instead two bird-cages, in a balcony that ran back to a door in the wing; and in each cage a bird was perched; a bobolink in one, a goldfinch in the other. A green parrot at a lower kitchen door, that opened into the garden, clamored for "cr—r—racker;" and kept clamoring, in spite of all two beautiful children, a boy and a girl, could do in supplying him with the desired article.

"Do you know of anybody that has found a canary, sir?" The rosy-cheeked boy who asked the question was at Ambrose's side, where he and Dr. Joseph stood looking over the enclosure at No. 96.

"Why, my little fellow?" asked Ambrose, with his hand lying on the boy's head.

"'Cause Car'line here," tipping his head toward No. 96, "lost hern one day. It flew away. An' she said if I'd find it anywheres, she'd gi' me fifty cents. An' I want ter find 'im."

"Who is Caroline?"

"Don't you know?" smiling as if that were strange enough. "She's his sister;" again tipping his head toward the house. "She's Mr. Cun'gham's sister. Her name's Car'line. She's very good. She's give mother a good deal."

"And she's going to give you fifty cents if you find the bird?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I'll give you fifty cents and more too, whether you find the bird or not," taking out his purse, "here's a little gold dollar for you. Can you carry it home without losing it, think?"

"In here, I can," slipping it into his mouth. "I guess you're as good as she is?" he added, looking inquiringly up into Ambrose's face, and over into Dr. Joseph's.

"As good as who is, Caroline?"

"Yes, Car'line. I'm goin' home now; thank you, sir. I'm goin' ter tell mother, an' show this to 'er."

"That's right. Don't swallow it. And, here!" for the boy was already tripping, although with his face half turned back to them.

"What's your name?"

"Isaac Allen, sir. 'Ike,' they call me all on 'em," replied the boy, walking with the longest steps he could take, backward toward his home.

"Well, be a good boy, Ike. Be a good boy to your mother. Be a good man." Ambrose laughed and spoke "at the top of his voice;" for the boy was already some rods from them.

"Yes, I will," hallowed back the boy, laughing in his turn. "I'm goin' ter show this," touching his tongue, "to mother." And now he turned fairly about with his back toward them, running with his might.

CHAPTER VI.

NOTHING was said about birdy, or about No. 96, on their way to Joseph's room. They laughed now and then. Ambrose rather vociferously, thinking of "Ike." Ambrose said once, "I shall keep my eye on that little fellow; if I can find out where he lives. I wish I had asked him."

And just as they reached Joseph's place, he said, without lifting his head from its thoughtful inclination,

"And that poor fellow, the architect—I never can think of his name—I shall see to him; that I know!"

Dr. Joseph found a call to Mr. Harvey's on his slate. He went, therefore, leaving Ambrose to employ himself as he pleased in his room.

"We're glad he's gone, ain't we, birdy?" said he, not taking time to look up to the bird; but, giving the books a shove from one side of the table, he sat down and began to write. Scratch, scratch went the pen, carried on and on through the lines by his powerful hand. There; a sweeping, graceful flourish, and it was done.

"Hear how it sounds, little lady," said he, still without looking up. He was taking the sheet into his hand to read it over aloud.

"No. 96," he read, "the bird you lost on the

27th ultimo, came flying into a poor man's window and lit on his finger and sang to him, the first thing. She has been singing and talking to him ever since; when her head is out from under her wing, that is; and she has made it easier, more comfortable for him rubbing along in the world, that is, as yet, rather a hard world for him to make his way in.

"Now, if you want your bird, No. 96, you have only to say so, (this day, or to-morrow, early, if you please,) in a note for the post-office, addressed to 'N. A.' But if you're a mind to give her up, here's a valuable bosom-pin made to order out of California gold. It is for the owner of the bird, whoever he or she may be. The pin won't pay you, whoever you may be. I don't send it for that. I send it to gratify myself. You must find *your* gratification in knowing that you have done good to one who needs and truly deserves it."

Then came the far-sweeping flourish; and that was all.

He enclosed the brooch, carefully folded in many rolls of tissue paper, and was gone with it before Dr. Joseph came back.

Dr. Joseph was gone a long time. Mrs. Harvey knew of a lady, Mrs. Holmes, of Hanover street, who had rheumatism; who had had it many years; who had tried a hundred remedies prescribed by one and another physician, one and another good old lady, but without the least perceptible benefit. On the contrary, her complaint became worse. The cords of her left arm became contracted and stiffened more and more. She slept less and less nights. She *dreaded* the nights, Mrs. Harvey said; dreaded the days; dreaded everything. "Mrs. Holmes would give any sum to be well," an acquaintance of Mrs. Harvey's, who was present, said. And she had heard her husband, had heard Mr. Holmes, who was an excellent husband and very fond of his wife, say, that he wouldn't value half he was worth, and he was a rich man, any more than he would value a straw, if he could see her as she was ten years ago.

"She wanted me to speak to you about it," interposed Mrs. Harvey. "She wants you to try if you think there is the least chance of doing her good. She wants you to call to-day to see her, at any rate."

Dr. Joseph would go, he said, and took her address.

"Ah, and our near neighbor, Mrs. Dale—you've met her here once or twice, you remember," said Mrs. Harvey, as Joseph was leaving the house; "she wants you to see her baby. You had better go there first; for I think the child

has a settled fever; scarlet fever, I am afraid it is. I should dread that, in the neighborhood," with a light shudder. "My baby died of scarlet fever, you remember I told you."

Yes, Dr. Joseph remembered. He looked down on little Willy's good face—he stood in the door beside his mother, with one hand holding her gown, and the other hugging a book of pictures that his friend, Dr. Joseph, had lately given him.

"Good-bye," said the boy, in answer to the look; "but stop! I want to kiss you just as I do papa, before you go."

"Bless him!" said the young doctor, kissing him and patting his shoulder.

When he raised his head and looked at Mrs. Harvey to bid her a "good morning," she saw tears in his eyes. And he saw tears in hers; for both had been touched by the genuine love and earnestness of the boy. Both thought what a dear boy he had been to them; and both prayed God, in that brief moment, to spare *him* the darling! whatever sickness came near.

The evening and the early morning passed, and no letter had been left at the post-office for "N. A." Ambrose *knew*; for he had been running in every hour. Humph! it took people so long! His was delivered at 96 yesterday, he knew; for he made an especial request to that end, and gave the post-boy a quarter.

"If this Miss Caroline Cunningham turns out to be an angel, (as she would do, you see, in a novel, however it may happen in this real life of yours) if you come face to face in all the public places and bump your noses at every corner, if she is as delicate and sweet as a lily, or as fresh and queenly as a rose, don't let love for her come into your heart. If you feel it thumping and edging its way at all, your nerves and veins, stave it off; for she never would have her eyes open till now. She'd come crawling when the meals were ready; she'd go crawling and dragging behind you, when she had your arm in the streets. Ha! I should go raving distracted with such a wife!" leaping out of his chair and half way across the room.

Dr. Joseph laughed quietly, with his thoughts as much on his new patients, as on what his cousin Ambrose was saying and doing. Even while he laughed, he turned the "Examiner" over to find Dr. Cook's essay on scarlet fever.

"I'm going!" He was gone. Ambrose was gone like an engine out of the chamber, down the stairs, out of the house. The next moment after Dr. Joseph lost sight of the vanishing form, he heard him laughing and repeating that he was gone, under his window.

"Sir—I can spare my bird. I want her to be

talked with a great deal, though; else she will miss it so much. I want her to be in the air a good deal now, in warm weather; and when it comes cold, I want her to be in a warm place, nights. She always has been. She will be chilled to death, perhaps, if she is forgotten, any time. She likes lettuce and chick-weed, now and then.

"I don't care about the brooch. It don't come near the place that my bird filled. I will keep it, however, if you desire it.

"My bird likes to be let out of the cage to walk and fly where she pleases around the room. Please let her come out sometimes, but be careful that no cats are near. Be careful every way; for there never was such a dear bird."

"There, old chap, what do you think of it?"

Ambrose had been standing in Dr. Joseph's door, with his cap on, with his elbows out at right angles, holding the sheet in both hands reading from it aloud.

Joseph kept his eyes on birdy, and the tip of his pen-holder some minutes between his teeth, without speaking. When he did speak, he said something about being rather sorry for the owner of the bird.

"Wonder if the little rascal is sorry," said Ambrose, going up to the cage. "If she is——"

"Eh? eh? eh?" interrupted birdy, shaking the water from her wings into his face; so that he went flying back and pretended to lose his breath. Then they all laughed, birdy and all. That is, birdy warbled as they had never heard her before; and between the strains she looked down on them with cunning eyes.

"Take this for a sign, cousin Jo, that she ain't sorry," said Ambrose. "Her old mistress ain't sorry."

"How do you know that it isn't a *master*?"

"See!" showing him the beautiful characters. "She rather likes it, depend upon it. Besides having rather a kind heart, (as one sees she has, by her care for her bird) which, if there was no other consideration, would make her give the bird up to you, she must rather like the romance and so on, of the incident. She does, I'll warrant you. If she's a weak thing, like some young girls, she'll write letters on her perfumed, gilt-edged, embossed sheets, to send in every direction. She'll begin 'em all with her '*ma ami*!' " (he pronounced it "May a my," and Dr. Joseph and birdy laughed with their might.) "She would! Then she'd tell the story. She'd own that her precious little night-cap is full of it when she sleeps, so that she dreams the rarest dreams of the new master that her bird sings to. She'd say that she dreams of seeing him; that she dreamed the night before, how she was in a

sweet place, where the grass and the wild flowers grew, and where a charming stream ran, sitting and thinking of him, when, all at once, he came in sight with her bird in his hand; and that, some how, (she hardly knew how, in her dream,) she was pledged to him there; and her bird was standing, dear thing! with one of her pretty feet on his finger and one on hers, singing ready to break her throat. Did one ever? She'd own, in conclusion, that she was foolish enough, that very day, to go off alone to 'the valley,' to see if she could find a place there, by the brook, anywhere, that was like that in her dream; and that, where-ever she went on the grounds, she half expected to see the very man of her dream coming out from behind a monument, or some shrubbery, or trees, close by her. She would, wouldn't she, rascal? So she would. You and I know. *He* knows," giving his hand a slight toss toward Dr. Joseph. "He believes it, and rather likes it, busy as he makes himself, indifferent as he *pretends* to make himself, there, with his sugar-powders and his monstrous great globules. If she, if the bird's old mistress is a sensible little thing, or a sensible great thing, she won't say a word, or write a word; but it will be in her thoughts a good deal, so that she'll be mighty still. She'd try not to think. She'll bite her lip, as a kind of penance, you say, whenever she finds herself given up to the thought—and, old fellow," bringing himself to a stand at Joseph's side, "this is the way I have about cured myself of dreaming—would you have believed it? biting my lip hard."

Dr. Joseph let his fingers rest on the powder he was folding, and looked up with not a little interest and pleasure in his face. "Cousin Nat, I am sure you are a good soul!" said he; for it was an expression of genuine sincerity and manliness, that he saw in the face looking down into his.

"Well, I am better than you, or anybody knows, I think; for I never do anything out of the way, without hating myself; hating, that is, the lips that spoke the profane thing, the hands that scrambled and pushed and made headlong haste to the sick. The soul, or whatever it is that is within me, somewhere there, where God has given it a place, I don't hate. I respect it. I have hope in it; I love it; just as I have hope in God, just as I love Him, for his holiness, you see. For this soul of mine always suffers and reproaches and begs, for every wrong thing my lips or hands do." His voice was unsteady, and he went on to stand by the bird awhile, to call her "a dear little rascal," and to see to the water in her bath.

Dr. Joseph sat very still with his fingers on

his little powder still, and his eyes on the window.

"I had been thinking about these things, you see, before your last letter came," Ambrose went on, again taking up his walk across the room. "I had thought a thousand times that *that* day I would begin new, before that last letter of yours came. Since that, I don't do anything, hardly, or say anything, that I don't, before or after it, think of myself as being—where I shall be, some day, without fail—on my death-bed; and ask myself how I'll feel then looking back to it."

"Yes; with the holy place, heaven, just before you, in sight, as it were, and an unholy life behind you," interposed Joseph.

There was a pause, which Ambrose interrupted by saying in low tones, "After that letter came, I tried not to swear. If I did swear, I bit my lip. I could have bit it through, I felt so mad with myself. Now I don't think I swear at all."

"Although you now and then affirm that you do," replied Dr. Joseph, smiling.

"I know. I do say 'I swear,' now and then. I'm going to leave that off too. One may as well be a *man*, as anything, when one is about it. See!" taking out the old watch and showing it to Joseph. "I'm off now. I've got something to see to before I go out."

"I hate to have you go," leaving his chair. "I could spare birdy better."

"I'm glad to hear you say that. Right glad I am if you like me some—rough and hard as I am."

"'Rough and hard,' cousin Nat?"

"Yes, on the outside. Good-bye, old fellow. I'm off."

CHAPTER VII.

Now, if one could only know something about birdy's old mistress; whether she had black eyes or blue, rosy cheeks or pale; whether she wore white dresses and little black aprons, or grey dresses and long grey aprons; whether she sang spontaneously; and, if she did, whether she sang waltzes and spirited ballads, or chants and vesper hymns; whether she were tall or short; if tall, whether she were slow and nun-like, or earnest and warm and child-like; if short, whether short like a doll, or short like the shortest of the sisters called commonly "the Graces"—if one could know all about it, one would like it, certainly. Dr. Joseph thought sometimes, when he sat there alone with birdy, and birdy had tucked her head under her wing for the night, that he would like to know. He did not allow his mind to dwell on it, though. It was nothing to him. Let her be

as she would, it was nothing to him, sitting there with his single room, and hardly able to pay the rent for that, hardly able to buy bread for himself and seed for the little thing up there on the perch. Caroline Cunningham, living there at her ease in the beautiful house on Lowell street, could be nothing to him—ever; nothing to him. He would remember Anna Rogers; and Dr. Rogers. He would bring them in to fill every place, if presumptuous thoughts came for admittance, so that the presumptuous thoughts should go directly away. He would take no thought for the future; what wife he would have, or what friend. He would be quiet and wait; doing whatever came to him to do with a good, earnest purpose. Mrs. Dale's child was very sick; but, God being his helper, he would raise him up. He would cure Mrs. Holmes; he had no doubt that he could. He would see to McCormick's boy. He would take as good care of him as if he were the President's boy; for no President could love his boy more than McCormick loved his; or need him so much. And, when he saw his patients all doing well, under his hands, he would bless God and be content there with his single room and his bird. So he did not go at all round into the neighborhood of No. 96. One day, when he was on Elm street, he heard a lady just behind him, say to her companion, "See! there's Caroline Cunningham. Don't *she* dress? And she's the hardest thing on the poor! and proud!"

"I sh'd think she was, 'f that's she," was the reply. "You mean that one with the children?"

"Yes. They're her brother's children. Beauties, ain't they?"

Dr. Joseph wanted to look at the pretty children. There never came a child near him, that he didn't want to speak to it, or at least to look at it. But Caroline Cunningham he would rather not see. Or, at any rate, he would take no pains, would not even turn his head to see her. He never would. Never!

Another time, he was in a drygoods store to fill some little commission of cousin Nan's; and he heard a salesman saying to a customer, "It's the richest thing in M——, by all odds. I defy you to find a piece of goods equal to it, if you go from one end of Elm street to the other. We engaged to keep it for Caroline Cunningham; or else send, if we sold this before she came for it, and get her some just precisely like it. If you know anything about her, you know that when she sets out for a thing, she sets out for a pretty nice thing. She'll have the best that there is in the market, or she won't have anything. Every

shopkeeper in M—, knows this. You can't do better, mum. You'd better take it. You'd be sure that nobody but Caroline Cunningham has a dress like it. See, mum. See the effect."

Dr. Joseph knew that the shopman was holding aloft the rich fabric promised to be kept for Caroline Cunningham; but he would have despised the poor kind of curiosity that would have led him to turn his head and see. He kept his eyes on his own poor purchase, on his own poor purse, until his errand was fairly over, and then he moved straight out; straight by the salesman; straight by "the richest thing in M—," promised to Caroline Cunningham, and home. He didn't like this. He was sorry birdy had had such a mistress; wondered whether the bird, coming from such a mistress, had really all the heartiness she appeared to him to have; and all the contentment, and all the pretty vivacity. He wondered if they were not, rather, airs that she had been trained to put on before people. He doubted birdy. He liked birdy much less than he did, a week ago. He hardly liked her at all. He fancied he should that evening take her over to No. 96, and put her into the cage with the goldfinch; to be picked on the head and tormented, if the goldfinch pleased.

He was smiling a little at his conclusion of the matter, was thinking that it was an unreasonably savage one, when he reached his door; when poor birdy, at sight of him, began to chirp in her half plaintive, half merry voice; to spring, to turn her head and keep her eyes on her master, which way soever she sprang, and then to warble precisely as if she were so glad to see him, that her little heart was ready to come out of her mouth.

Ah! Dr. Joseph almost hated himself for having doubted her a minute, the blessed thing! the dear thing! the greatest comfort that any poor, good-for-nothing felle like him ever had! He threw down his bundle. He had her in his hands, had her pressed close to his cheek. He held his hand so that she could pick and eat a piece of apple that he held between his teeth. It came on dusk, pretty soon, and then the bird cuddled close between his arm and his breast; talked a little, in a low, dear voice, as she cuddled, and then she tucked her head away and went to sleep. They had never loved each other so well, had never found it so good being together, as then. So Dr. Joseph thought. So he was very happy in thinking; and he sat there until bed time, without lights, nursing his bird, and his comfort in his bird; and thinking that she should no more go back to No. 96, than he himself would go.

AMBROSE had been gone from M— a week, and Dr. Joseph had not once heard from him, when, late one afternoon, he came in upon him with a "Hallo, old fellow! Back again, you see." He brushed his hands as if to free them from dust as he spoke.

"How does little rascal do?" He chirruped and whistled and sang to the bird, she chirruped and sang to him, so that the room was shaken, as it were; so that the landlady's modest little daughter came running up and said, "I knew it was you. I knew you had got back, Mr. Ambrose. I could tell by the noise."

"You could?" catching her suddenly by the arms, and taking her round the room with whirling, waltzing, rapid movements. Kate didn't mind it. She was the best dancer in Mrs. Bundy's school. She had the most delicate feet. She took the lightest steps—springing upon the very tips of her toes, as if she were an Indian rubber girl; and had the most beautiful movements, "as if her whole soul was in it," Mrs. Bundy and others said.

She didn't mind, therefore, being carried round by Ambrose's long steps and strong arms. On the contrary, "I like it," she said, quietly, when it was over.

"So do I, little one. Tell your mother, little Kate, that Dr. Jo don't want any coffee to-night. I'm going to take him away."

"You are?" asked Joseph. "I guess not."

"Ah, yes, indeed I am!" bringing his own cap and Dr. Joseph's hat. "To-morrow I will come and take you, little Kate. I want you to see what I've got down on Hanover street, a little way."

The girl clasped her hands low before her, danced gently a few steps and said, "You're good! I think you're the best of anybody."

"You do?"

"Yes; if you were to die, I should cry every night, after I went to bed, as long as I live. I was thinking about it last night." Tears were in her eyes. They came also to Ambrose's.

"Ah, no. You would think that I had gone where I should never more dig for gold, or go wandering about, or do or say any naughty things. This would be good, wouldn't it, little Kate, to go where we would never do, would never fear doing anything wrong? don't you think it would?"

Kate didn't think, she said, that she would like to die, or to have him, or anybody that she liked, die. She thought it was very easy to not go off digging gold, and to be good here. She said it with raised eyes and clasped hands.

Ambrose told her that that was because she was a little child. When she was a woman, she'd know better what it is to live.

He bade her "good-bye" with a sober face, and went with Dr. Joseph.

"Dr. Wethergreen—Dr. Wethergreen," said Joseph, reading in wondering tones the name on a new sign over the door of a house on whose gate Ambrose already had his hand.

"Yes; this is Dr. Wethergreen's place," said Ambrose, speaking briskly. "We'll go in and see 'im, won't we? We'll leave our hats here on the table—thus. We'll put our hair back from our foreheads—thus;" giving his massy black locks a sweep from his forehead. "We'll take grand steps—thus; for," looking back to Joseph with his finger lifted between them, "the doctor's a crabby stick, who will snarl and throw the poker at us if we don't suit 'im. I hear him now;" with his fingers hold of the door-handle, and his ear at the narrow opening he made. "He grumbles, you see, about the supper Mrs. Wethergreen has put before him. Hear 'im!" with his ear at the crack again. "See 'im!" opening the door wide. "There he is!" taking Joseph along and seating him, with his hands on his shoulders, in a large arm-chair by an open window. "There he is in his easy-chair, where he can see some very bright clouds by looking off in that direction." He pointed through the open window to the sunset clouds, mantling the wood-capped hills over on the Goffstown side. "There is"—opening a door that led back—"why, here's mother, as true as you live! And little Nan!" He drew them both into the room, as if in great surprise.

"What is it? how have you managed?" asked Joseph, standing, and still holding cousin Nan's slender fingers.

"Why, you see," bringing one foot around to tip it on its toes, "I went in to see Ayer about this tenement, when I was here before. I could have it if I wanted it; that is, if mother and my nice little Nan here," clapping a hand on each of Nan's shoulders, "wanted it. I thought they would. I thought that I should be going off again, sometime, no doubt. For, if I had so much gold that I must poke it out of my path with my foot

wherever I stirred," he added, swinging his foot along the floor before him, "I should search and dig. I have that in my blood," reddening deeply, and shaking himself from head to foot, lion-like, "something, I don't know what it is; an overplus of energy and strength, and I don't know what else, so that I *must* stir myself. So, I shall be off, probably. And, before I go, I wanted to have mother and little Nan and you, Jo, here together. I want mother and little Nan to take care of you; and you to take care of mother and little Nan. I've paid the rent for the year, beforehand—'twas only a hundred dollars, which I was glad to be rid of. It leaves a place in my purse where I can put some more, you see, little Nan."

"Did you ever see such a boy?" asked Mrs. Ambrose, after she and Dr. Joseph had several times exchanged looks in silence.

"Of course he never *did*, mother," said Ambrose, laughing and starting for a back room. "We came by the first train, you see," speaking to Dr. Joseph, and showing him through the open door how everything was in order out there too; showing him how the cloth was laid for four, with the same best dishes of fine green ware, that he had seen so many times, within the last ten years, on the table at the farm.

"This don't *make* you, I know, cousin Jo," said Ambrose, when they were talking it over at table, how good the location was for him, so near Elm street, and yet so much pleasanter every way for a home, than that crowded thoroughfare; how the rooms were right in number and size; and how, there, birdy's cage could be hung out among the branches, and then wouldn't she sing! "But, if you do still have to sit and wait in the old way, you can get along with it better here where mother and Nan are. That's what I thought about. You'll have warm dishes, too." And looking steadily, with his head put forward, into Dr. Joseph's face—"if you say one word, or think one thought about paying your board, for five years to come, I shall be mad. I shall! In the course of ten years, little Nan will be getting married perhaps. Then you may do something, everything that you want to, for her."

(TO BE CONCLUDED.)

KINDLING A FLAME.

BY EMILY LENNOX.

"DOROTHY," exclaimed Tom, looking up from his book in wonder, "what on earth have you got there?"

His sister had come in glowing with frosty brightness, her eyes all asparkle with pleasure. She carried over her shoulder a pretty bag, pieced out of bits of an old Roman scarf and stuffed very full of something—Tom wondered what.

"They are pine cones, dear," said Dorothy, who, young though she was, always played the mother to poor crippled Tom.

"What are you going to do now?" he asked, good-humoredly, and pushed aside the tiresome review article he was writing, to take up one of the large brown cones, which gave out a strong aromatic odor.

"To burn them in our open grate," said Dorothy, gleefully. And she straightway tossed one or two in the fire.

It was beautiful to see them blaze. There was a sputter and a flare like fireworks till the gum was all consumed, and then the skeleton cones, ignited to a glowing red, crumbled slowly away.

"What a fire to dream over!" said Tom, and a tender smile flitted about the corners of his mouth, where lurked the shadows cast by years of suffering.

"The reveries of a bachelor," observed Dorothy, patting his bearded cheek softly. "Are you ready for your tea, dear? We will have it here, and then I shall put on more cones, and we will dream to our hearts' content."

Tom laid aside his work gladly and yet with a sigh. It was so slow in the doing, and paid so poorly! He wondered how they were going to get through the winter, he and Dorothy, living all alone and too proud to ask for help—if there had been anyone to give it, which there was not. Dorothy had made up her mind what to do if the worst came; but she did not tell Tom, for he held certain antiquated aristocratic notions in regard to women, and did not propose that she should press forth into the world to earn her own living.

"Tom dear," she said, when the tea was steaming on the table and she had heaped the cones in the open grate, "don't you think we might take a couple of boarders, this winter?"

Tom shivered apprehensively, but Dorothy went on:

"It would help us a great deal, and it wouldn't make much extra work. We've plenty of room, too."

"Yes," said Tom; "if we could only get the right kind of persons. But those who board in cheap places are generally common and vulgar. You couldn't live with them, Dorothy."

"Why, there must be plenty of nice poor people besides ourselves," said Dorothy, laughing at his arrogance.

"Yes," Tom answered, dubiously; "if you can only get at them."

The cone-fire was crackling away gloriously. Its ruddy reflection danced on the window-panes, for Dorothy would never have the curtains drawn.

"It is such a comfort," she often said, "on a dark night, to be able to look in at the windows, as you pass by, and see a little bit of life."

Dorothy was gazing into the fire. They had grown quite still and dreamy, when suddenly a sharp rap of the brass knocker summoned Dorothy to the door. She admitted a gentleman wrapped in a heavy great-coat—a dark, fine-looking gentleman—who took off his hat and said politely:

"I am sorry to disturb you—but I believe you want to take a lady and gentleman to board, this winter."

Dorothy gasped for breath. How on earth had this stranger found out a project of which she had spoken to-night for the first time, even to Tom?

"I—I had thought of doing so," she stammered. "Will you walk in?"

"My name is Hamilton," said the gentleman, who had the manners of a courtier. "My sister is just recovering from a long illness. I have had her abroad this summer, and, under the doctor's orders, I want to find a quiet household where she can rest this winter and enjoy all the comforts of a home."

"I am sure we are quiet enough," said Dorothy, with a faint smile. "This is my brother, sir." The gentleman bowed to Tom. "There are only the two of us."

"There are only two of us, also," rejoined

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the visitor, pleasantly. And Dorothy soon found herself unexpectedly assuming the rôle of landlady; for Mr. Hamilton was pleased with the rooms, and seemed utterly indifferent about the terms, and offered a well-known banker as reference, so that they struck a bargain then and there.

"Well, Dorothy!" said Tom, reproachfully, when Mr. Hamilton had departed, "it seems that you have been very decidedly acting on your own responsibility! Why didn't you tell me you had advertised?"

"I had not!" she answered, eagerly. "I don't know anything about it, Tom. It's some witch-work. I haven't an idea how he ever knew we even thought of boarders."

"He seems like a gentleman," said Tom, somewhat mollified; and then both agreed that a streak of luck had befallen them.

Leon Hamilton and his sister, Mrs. Floyd, came the following day. She was a widow, rich, handsome, and happily escaped from an unwilling marriage with a man many years her senior.

"Isn't she lovely?" Dorothy cried, as she and Tom sat down to talk the pair over.

Mrs. Floyd's soft draperies had just trailed away in a gentle rustle, and Tom sighed.

"She seems a very fine woman," he said, in the guarded fashion of a man who will not commit himself, and Dorothy sang all the praises in solo.

They got on famously with the new boarders; and, one February night, three months after Leon Hamilton had brought his sister there, they all sat around the open fire like old friends.

"I wish you two could go to Europe with us, this spring," said Mrs. Floyd, patting Dorothy's hand, which lay quite near, but looking directly into Tom's pensive face as she spoke.

"Why don't you wish we could go to the moon?" retorted Dorothy, cheerfully, quite unmindful of the fluttering sigh that had somehow trembled on Tom's lips very often of late.

"You have done me so much good," Mrs. Floyd went on. "I feel quite well now. These three months have been such quiet restful ones to me. I wonder how Leon ever found you out?"

"That is what I should like to know!" said Dorothy, eagerly, while Tom looked up and Mr. Hamilton laughed softly to himself.

"It was all my own impudence," he said. "You see, Miss Dunlap, we had advertised for board, and one of the answers was from a lady

living on this street—1912, I think it was. I went to look at the rooms, but didn't like either them or the landlady, so I decided we wouldn't go there. But, as I was passing your house, I caught sight of this open fire and stopped. Yes, Miss Dunlap, and I was mean enough to stand on the pavement and look in."

"You didn't see much, I fancy," said Dorothy, smiling.

"I saw you. You were pouring out tea, and there was something in the way you did it which made me think you were a good housekeeper; and I have since had reason to applaud my own penetration."

"There, there!" said Mrs. Floyd, patting Dorothy's glowing cheek. "Don't blush so. It's true, my dear."

"Then I saw you pile the cones on the fire," Leon continued, "and I observed to myself: 'I'd like to have the satisfaction of sitting beside that hearth, if only for a few minutes. Perhaps they may take boarders.' So I made up my mind I'd come in and ask—"

"But you said that you understood we wanted boarders," Dorothy interrupted.

"Did I? Oh, well, I had to throw an air of plausibility over my conduct, and I probably thought that there might be some good in suggesting the idea to you in a positive form. But, to tell the truth, I was rather out of countenance when I met you face-to-face. I was frightened at my own assurance; and, when you said that you had thought of taking boarders, I decided there had been a direct interposition of Providence in my favor."

"That's just what I thought about you," said Dorothy, with a bright smile.

And Mrs. Floyd added dreamily:

"Some of the pleasantest things in life come to us in that unexpected way."

It was late when they all went to bed, and later still when Leon Hamilton smoked himself out of matches and went downstairs again for a light.

The house was perfectly still; the atmosphere of the hall was stifling. What was that strange heated odor that pervaded it? He opened the library-door, and was driven back by a perfect blast of smoke. Before him, all was a fierce red glare. A coal from the open fire had fallen on the rug, and the room was in flames.

He never knew how he got upstairs and awakened his sister.

"The house is on fire!" he cried, in a voice that was shrill with excitement. "Call Tom Dunlap! I'll go for Miss Dorothy!"

Dorothy's room was at the end of a long

narrow passage, the entrance to which was by a door closed in winter to shut off draughts. Leon tried it; but it was locked! Good heavens! how could he make her hear? The flames had burst into the hall. He heard Tom's voice, and called to him to get out with Mrs. Floyd as quick as he could.

There had been no alarm yet; but it rang out now, just as Leon, frantic with the failure to make Dorothy hear him, swung himself out to the top of the bay-window and gained her room in that way.

Startled from a sound sleep, Dorothy found herself wrapped in a blanket and borne away in Leon's arms. She remembered the awful cry of "Fire!" which struck her ears as he ran along the hall with her in his arms, and then a seething mass of flame seemed to burst forth on all sides.

"Don't be frightened, Miss Dorothy," he said. But, happily for her, she knew no more till she recovered from a deep swoon and her dear old home was in ruins.

"Where—where is Mr. Hamilton?" she asked, anxiously. "And Tom and Mrs. Floyd?"

"They's all right, Miss Doe," said Susan, an old black servant who had hastened to the scene of former prosperity. "Massa Tom and de lady done tend to the gem'mun what's burned so bad."

"Is he seriously burned?" cried Dorothy. "Mighty bad, Miss Doe. I'se feard he won't nebber git ober it, I is!"

"Oh, he must not die!" she cried, springing up from the couch where they had laid her. "Oh, Leon! my love, my darling! you must not give your life for me!"

A sweet fate seemed to follow her. She was caught up tenderly in Leon Hamilton's arms, while he kissed her passionately.

"It was not I who was burned, little Doe," he whispered, while poor Susan stood by amazed. "Thank God! we four are all safe, but a poor fireman was struck by a plank and terribly hurt. No, darling! I won't let you go. Don't struggle so. Don't tell me you repent that sweet confession. I love you, Dorothy. I have known it for some time; but to-night, dearest, I learned that I could not live without you. Promise me you will be my wife."

Happy Dorothy stood committed already, so she knew there was but one course to take. She took it, and Leon was satisfied.

At ten o'clock in the morning, a happy little party, arrayed in borrowed clothes, took breakfast at the Delavan House.

"Hamilton," said Tom, as they lingered over their coffee, "I have a serious question to propound. Have you any objections to my marrying your sister? I am nothing but a poor cripple and a penny-a-liner, but—"

A soft hand stole over his mouth. "Hush, dear!" said Mrs. Floyd, softly. "You said you wouldn't talk about that."

"My dear fellow," said Leon, warmly, "I haven't a single objection to you, if you haven't any to me. I have asked Dorothy to be my wife."

"You deserve her, I am sure," said Tom, "much more than I do Amy."

"Behold how big a fire a little spark kindleth!" quoted Mrs. Floyd. "This comes of kindling a flame with Hymen's torch."

"It was those pine cones," said Dorothy, demurely.

"No, love!" Leon whispered. "It was you."

So the four of them went to Europe together after all, and left the poor fireman, who was better of his burns, so richly endowed that he looked on the accident as a godsend.

LITTLE LADY DOROTHY.

BY FRANK LEE BENEDICT.



"HURRY home to see our baby
D DUNKYLLAN"

So ran the telegram. Twenty years have passed since I received it, but I remember the words of that startling and inexplicable message as if I had read them yesterday. You will not wonder at the strong adjectives I employ to characterize the communication, when I tell you that I was a bachelor, and that the name signed to the dispatch appertained to my spinster sister, a woman of good conduct and reputation, who had celebrated her fortyfifth birthday some months previous.

It was early in July, and the missive found me in the neighborhood of the Adirondacks, where I had gone to attend to the sale of some land. My business was finished, but I had proposed pushing on into the woods for a week's camping-out before returning home to accompany D. Dunkylian on our usual summer trip.

Of course, that imperious and mysterious summons caused me to relinquish my plan. I drove in the evening to the nearest railway-station, missed the train, was forced to spend several hours in a horrible little waiting-room, and did not reach my native New Jersey and my quaint old dwelling-place until late on the following afternoon.

Although I had telegraphed that I might be expected, there was no carriage awaiting me—an unheard-of lack of attention on the part of my sister, which was explained when the telegraph operator handed me a dispatch for her: it proved to be the one I had sent.

In a little over half an hour, I reached the limit of my own domain; and presently,

at the further end of the winding avenue, the big rambling mansion showed its turrets and chimneys. The sound of wheels brought out the dogs as we neared the veranda; the joyful tumult they raised at sight of me brought out the butler and two or three other servants, and, as usual, returning home was an agreeable experience: for I was never above the weakness of being liked by everybody about, whether friends, dependents, or dumb animals.

As I entered the hall, down the stairs there came a tall stately woman, whose somewhat severe features were softened by an expression of genuine goodness and a beautiful smile. This personage was my sister: always daintily and appropriately dressed, always enthusiastic over some hobby or plan for somebody's good, rather imperious by nature—a little obstinate too, but with these qualities kept from getting out of perspective by a wide brain and a large heart.

"My dear Gregory, how glad I am to see you!" she cried. "What do you mean by not sending word? I knew you would get here to-day—I felt it; but I didn't look for you till evening, and it's all your own fault that nobody was at the station to meet you—you always were a careless boy, and you always will be."

This was a delusion to which my sister clung, as she did to that of regarding me as a boy, though my fortieth birthday was near at hand. As soon as she had done smothering me with kisses—she was as weak where I was concerned as were the old servants and the dogs—I held up the telegram as a proof that I was not in fault on this occasion.

"I received your dispatch, though," I said; "and now tell me what in the name of all that is impossible did it mean?"

My sister dragged me up the stairs in hot haste, and, when we reached the top, caught both my arms and fairly shook me back and forth.

"Mean?" she cried. "Could anything be clearer? And oh, Gregory, it's the loveliest

baby—my baby—well, our baby—you shall have a share in it, though—”

“Your baby—my baby—our baby?” I broke in, feeling utterly dazed and unable to decide whether she or I had suddenly developed insanity. “Demaris Dunkyllan, I never heard such a disreputable lot of pronouns applied to an infant in all my life! Your baby—I don’t believe it! My baby—excuse me! Our baby—I accept no share—”

“Oh, you ridiculous old imbecile!” Miss Dunkyllan interrupted. “Have you forgotten? Don’t you remember that Cousin Elsie Desborough had a baby born three months ago—the very week her poor husband died?”

I was forced to admit that I had forgotten the fact; small wonder, either, as I had not seen the lady for several years, and had never met her husband but once.

“Well, what then?” I inquired, not because I was unfeeling, but because my mind was occupied with the news about the child.

“Why, the other day I received a telegram begging me to go on to Pennsylvania: Elsie was dying—and she did die, soon after I reached there. She wanted us to take the baby—could I refuse? Oh, the dearest little thing—and we are the nearest relatives she has, so there will be nobody to bother!”

“I should say the bother would be likely to come from the individual you call the baby,” I said, dryly. “A baby, here—a fixture—to grow up in this house—to be on our hands for life!”

“Now, don’t say you are meaning not to like it!” cried my sister. “I know, whatever faults you have, you are kind-hearted—and not to like a baby, that you never saw—”

I was about to suggest that never having seen this unexpectedly granted blessing might be considered a fair reason for not being very enthusiastic over its possession; but, before my sister could get further or I could speak, up the side hall appeared a plump apple-faced young woman wearing a nurse’s cap and carrying in her arms a mass of fleecy white muslin, lace, and embroidery.

In another instant, my sister had swooped down on the little woman, snatched the fleecy mass, was uttering the most insane

beginnings of sentences and laughing and half crying at once. A moment more, the white mass was in my arms and Demaris exclaiming:

“Go to its Uncle Greg—so it should, the darling!”

Looking up at me were the two loveliest blue eyes that ever human being saw, and the fairest sweetest little face that any baby short of a cherub ever owned; and slowly the tiny mouth, which a leaf of a rosebud would have covered, softened into a heavenly smile—very faint, but a smile!

My sister and the nurse burst into exclamations of rapturous wonder, from which, broken as they were, I gathered that this was the first smile the baby had bestowed on mortal, and that it was three months old on this very day.

Now, I put it to you dispassionately: could even an old bachelor have helped yielding to such delicate flattery on the part of the prettiest imaginable morsel of humanity?

Baby took to me at the first glance, and I took to baby; and, from that day to this, the bond then formed between us has only grown stronger and more enduring.

“Isn’t she the loveliest creature you ever set eyes on, Greg?” demanded my sister.

Baby vouchsafed another tiny smile and waved her infinitesimal fists in the air, and I declare I think I was half serious when I answered—Demaris has never let me forget the speech:

“I don’t believe it’s a baby at all—it’s a little cherub!”

My sister hugged me, and the nurse’s heart was won; next to her nursing, I still rank in honest Gretchen’s affections.

Well, well, that day lies a good way back in the past now, but no incident in my life stands out more vividly in my memory; and I can say, too, that no day ever brought me a source of greater and more uninterrupted happiness.

Let me admit at once that, though our lives went on apparently much as usual, both to my sister and myself Baby Dorothy—the quaint name exactly suited her—was the centre of every thought, the pivot on which every plan turned—why, more: the sun about which the domestic sphere revolved; and, from the old butler down, the servants shared our devotion.

I had always sneered at the weakness of

husbands and fathers in allowing a speck of humanity to bring an entire household into subjection; but I developed the faculty rapidly, and, from the moment I opened the outer door, went about like a hen treading on eggs whenever I was met with the warning: "Baby's asleep!"

Though this precaution, in little Dorothy's case, was wasted; that child was a wonder—nothing disturbed her slumbers. Then, too, even as a tiny thing, she slept nearly the whole night—always went to sleep good-natured, and always woke up radiant.

Before she had made sunshine in the house for a fortnight, every one of us wondered how we ever managed to support existence without her; in less than a month, we found it difficult to believe that we ever had, although everything dated from Baby's arrival—it was to us what the first Hegira became to Mohammedans. I could see plainly that Demaris was really ridiculous about the child, and Demaris made me the laughing-stock of visitors and neighbors by her jokes and inventions in regard to my fairly imbecile weakness. I have no doubt that visitors and neighbors laughed about us both, behind our backs; they might not have been afraid to do so to my face, but it would have required a bold spirit to venture on any such liberty with D. Dunkyllan. Indeed, Demaris, always stately enough in ordinary intercourse, waxed more grand than ever in manner; partly, I thought, to atone for her weakness where the baby was concerned, partly because of her pride in that tiny fairy—whom I am quite convinced she would have regarded as her spiritual offspring, had she ever muddled her brain with the mysteries of Eastern religions.

And how the weeks flew, each day developing some fresh grace and charm in our small Dorothy. She made acquaintance with her own chubby toes and rosy fingers, and went through every gradation of delightful surprise. She not only smiled, she laughed, cooed, uttered soft bird-like notes which seemed as if they ought to be words, but which belonged to no human language.

She was five months old—six months—before we could realize it. She was bewitching in short frocks; she cut a tooth—a second—and, during each operation, was sweeter and more amiable than any other baby ever was in its most auspicious

moments. She grew as fast as some summer flower, and grew lovelier with each change.

In those days, that wonderful book, "Baby's Kingdom," did not exist; but Demaris and I originated one of our own. Demaris had a volume in which she chronicled Dorothy's daily progress, the state of her health, everything about her; and in this tome she put various drawings of mine—I had a little talent for heads—as well as sundry bits of verse of my composition. For I was guilty sometimes of writing verses, though I was not mad; and these trifles Demaris treasured and believed in—the only special sign of madness she ever betrayed.

And presently Dorothy was a year old; then the wonderful day arrived on which she stood alone—more wonderful, that on which she took her first uncertain tottering step! By and by, Dorothy had reached eighteen months; was a toddling, laughing, chattering creature rapidly training her tongue to mortal speech, though still retaining a sufficient recollection of her angelic language to add a strange sweetness to her broken words.

Then Dorothy was two years old, and time galloped and raced till we had no longer any baby in the house; but in its place was a yellow-haired, blue-eyed fairy enchanting beyond the power of words to describe—always a pleasure, always a happiness, always the central motive of our lives! Certainly there never was a child like her: the incarnation of health, and the gayest sweetest-tempered mite that ever made sunshine in two elderly hearts.

Even the inevitable childish diseases paid her the briefest possible visits; she went through chicken-pox, measles, whooping-cough, and mumps in rapid succession and without ruffling her amiability. D. Dunkyllan and I suffered so much for her that I think perhaps this vicarious performance left less for her to endure.

Of course, my sister had always ruled me and the entire household—a woman always does rule, unless she has brutes to deal with; but there are ways and ways! Demaris made a great show of consulting me on most matters, but I really was too indolent by nature to care, provided I was made comfortable, though occasionally some point arose on which I asserted myself; then, like a wise woman, D. Dunkyllan let her way be mine.

Naturally, the government and training of little Lady Dorothy fell into Demaris's hands; I was content to leave it there, preferring much to play the part of sympathizer and indulger. Fond as she was of her, Demaris taught the child that obedience was necessary—obedience without argument, too—and, knowing that my sister was right, I never interfered. Indeed, there would seldom have been any occasion, so rarely was a show of discipline required, for Dorothy was undoubtedly the sweetest and best child that ever lived. Still, she had a will of her own—no creature fit to live is devoid of that—and now and then she betrayed her kinship to ordinary humanity by a passing fit of naughtiness. Demaris always punished her in some fashion, but dear me! she and I invariably suffered more than the child did. I must admit that it is on record against me that once, when I came home and found Lady Dorothy immured in solitary confinement, I opened the door in answer to her appeal, and, as I would not interfere by letting her out, I entered, and we spent a very pleasant hour in the half-twilight—the closet had a narrow window—while I related one of Dorothy's pet fairy-tales. What a child she was for stories, to be sure—insatiable; and the oftener she had heard a tale, the better she liked it and the oftener she begged for it. Her memory, too, was something prodigious; if I committed the slightest mistake or ventured on the least change, so much as to alter an elf's dress from pink to blue, or let a giant exclaim "Oh" at a point where he had been in the habit of saying "Ho," my little listener interrupted me ruthlessly and not unselfdom constrained me to go back to the very beginning. "For sure," as she said, "'cause you might have made a other mi'take, and Aunt Demaris always says two mi'takes count for a fault."

And the strange ideas and lovely fancies she developed, the perplexing questions she asked, the steps she forced me to take and Demaris too, the sweet unconscious tyranny she exercised, the delight and blessing she was, no words of mine could picture.

The summer that little Lady Dorothy—my pet name for her had become the common property of the household—had her sixth birthday, we went out into the picturesque Pennsylvania valley where she was born. We had friends in the quiet nook, which lay

in the shadow of lofty hills; there were pleasant drives and walks in every direction, a river to row on, various miniature lakes within reach, and altogether no more agreeable place could well have been found for a resting-place during the hot months. Dorothy's father had owned some property there; coal had lately been discovered, so the land required looking after, and I may add that later it became of considerable value.

I mention this trip because of an incident which happened while we were gone—an event so dreadful that to this day I never can think of it without a shudder.

It was a glorious day late in August; the air had a touch of autumn in it, and the valley was like a haunt in fairy-land. I had driven some miles away to finish the business which had made one of our reasons for our journey; Demaris went to spend the afternoon with a friend, to whose house Gretchen was to take Dorothy; but Gretchen was seized with one of her terrible sick headaches and had to go to bed for a couple of hours.

She entrusted Dorothy to the laundress of the hotel, whom we all liked and who was devoted to our little lady. While the two were in the garden, somebody opened a window and called to the woman to get a telegram which had just arrived for her. That dispatch informed her of the sudden death of her husband. I suppose that, under the circumstances, she was excusable for fainting away and having hysterics and forgetting Dorothy for a full hour; at least, looking at the matter from this distance of time, I can try to suppose she was—I could not even go so far for a long while.

It chanced that the persons who were about her did not know that she had had charge of Dorothy, and, when at last she regained her senses sufficiently to hurry back, little Lady Dorothy was nowhere to be found. At the lower end of the garden was a gate which gave on the river-bank; this stood wide open. To the right, a road made a sharp turn toward a shady grove, where I often took the child; a road which had a great attraction for the little one, because it led to the encampment of a band of gypsies who had wandered into the neighborhood just before our arrival.

The first dread which suggested itself to everybody was the river—the swift-flowing,

broad, bright river, in which three children had been drowned only a fortnight before. Gretchen was roused from her bed and became a maniac at once. Demaris was summoned in hot haste by the awful announcement that "they thought the little girl had fallen into the water." I, returning only a little while afterward, found the whole neighborhood astir, and—I can't write about it even now—I cannot! I tried to begin lightly, thinking I could tell how we all behaved, but it is out of the question.

I knew she was not in the river—I told Demaris, so, over and over; if I had not been able to believe as well as to say it, I should have gone mad; I think I did, anyway, quiet and self-contained as they told me later I appeared from first to last.

I started up the road toward the grove; it was better to go on foot, because at any flower-patch or pretty nook the child might have turned aside. I searched every corner or glade as I passed; several times I thought I heard little Dorothy answer my calls, but it was only the voices of the birds, the murmur of the breeze, or some other of nature's countless musical sounds. I am not writing a sensational story, only relating exactly what happened, so I will say at once that I was nearly a mile away from the hotel when my search ended.

As I was rounding a sharp turn, I heard a horse's tread, a man's voice, and then a child's laugh. In another instant, I saw a venerable old gypsy trotting toward me on his nag, and perched in front of him sat little Lady Dorothy, as much at home apparently as if she had been in the habit of taking a similar promenade every day of her life since she could remember.

"Uncle Greg! Uncle Greg!" she shouted. "I started to meet you and I got lost; I was afraid a little, but I didn't cry: you told me the Spartan boys never cried. Then I met this nice old gentleman. I 'pect he's the king of the gypsies, only he's left his crown at home."

It was the one occasion during her whole childhood in which that child ever caused Demaris or myself an hour's anxiety, for she was such a thoroughly healthy mite that no serious illness ever overtook her.

And the years flew by! Little Lady Dorothy was ten—twelve—fourteen—then, before we could realize it, a slender graceful slip of

a girl whose sixteenth birthday was to be kept with becoming pomp and ceremony.

She had never been absent from us a night or a whole day since Demaris first brought her to our house. We were singularly fortunate in the governess, who remained with us from the time when a governess became a necessity. The lady was a friend of my sister's—a thoroughly educated woman with a heart equal to her head, which was a good deal to say. Later, of course, the child had various masters, and certain branches she studied with me, early showing that she shared my taste for languages and music.

Two years more passed with almost the same rapidity, and, with a shock of surprise, D. Dunkyllan and I woke to the fact that our treasure was a young lady. A more charming specimen of the genus could not have been found; nor was this simply our opinion—everybody who came in contact with the winning creature said the same. She was not a beauty exactly—she was still little Lady Dorothy in stature as well as name, but she was exquisitely pretty; nature had taken apparently excessive pains with every feature, every line, every curve. Nobody could resist her manner, her voice, and her slow pensive smile. She might easily have been a little spoiled, a little selfish, considering the vast importance she had always found herself in her home; but she was neither the one nor the other. Her first thought was always for those about; the thing her aunt or I wished was always what she wanted to do; there was no affectation or self-sacrifice about it, either—altruism was as natural to her as breathing.

Well, that summer we went up into Canada and wandered about for several weeks, and while there we met the son of the most intimate friend I had ever had, and, of course, I welcomed him as cordially as if he had belonged to my own kith and kin. His father had died years before; but, though I had not seen the son since he was a little lad, I had always kept track of him, and he had been in the habit, as he grew up, of writing to me every now and then. He was a splendid fellow—only twentyfive—and had lately returned from England, where he had lived for the last twelve years with relatives of his mother. He had been educated at Oxford, had traveled a good deal, and was altogether an exceptional young man.

A misfortune had befallen him within the last year which might have almost crushed many men, but it seemed to affect him very little. He had been brought up as his uncle's heir; the fortune was large, and his yearly allowance had always been in keeping with his expectations, so that he had naturally fallen into very liberal, if not actually extravagant, habits. The property was mostly in India; a twelvemonth previous, Roger Trevor and his uncle had been called out there by some unexpected business troubles. The upshot of the matter was that the old gentleman found himself ruined by the treachery of a trusted agent, and his already enfeebled health could not withstand the shock—he died a couple of weeks after reaching Bombay.

So Roger found himself face to face with the necessity of carving his own fortune. He had come over to Canada with the intention of proceeding to the United States. If a promised opening in Jamaica presented itself, he would go there; if not, he might establish himself somewhere on the Pacific Slope, which region he proposed to visit while waiting.

Of course, Roger was at once adopted into the family; I had always fancied that his father had been the hero of a little romance of my sister's in her girlhood, and the motherly affection for Roger which she showed from the first convinced me that my old fancy had some basis in fact.

When we returned home, the young fellow went with us. I would not hear of his going to California until he received the decision from Jamaica, which was sure to reach him sometime early in the autumn.

What a delightful summer we had! Guests came and went, the weeks floated by, and our little home-circle of four seemed the exact number requisite for perfect happiness. "I don't know how we ever got on without Roger," I used to say to Dorothy. I think that, on a moderate average, I made the remark to her at least twice each day, and she never contradicted me. "He is like her own boy to Demaris," I usually added, "and like a brother to you, Dorothy." And Dorothy never contradicted this statement, either, though I cannot remember that she ever assented to it.

Of course, you know what is coming; but, incredible as it may appear, I never once

thought of it—and, what was odder, I don't believe D. Dunkyllan perceived the fact, though afterward she declared that because I was as blind as a mole was no reason for supposing she must be too.

At all events, it was Demaris who first made the discovery of what had doubtless been plain for weeks to everybody about us—unless to Dorothy herself. How well I remember the day—a bright afternoon early in October. I had been writing in my study; I wanted to show Demaris a letter I had received, so I went through the library into a shady veranda of the wing in which my sister had her own apartments, certain I should find her there at that hour.

"Demaris," I called, as I caught sight of her in her great arm-chair, leaning forward with her back toward me, looking out across the shrubberies.

At the sound of my voice, she turned, put up her hand in warning, then signed me to approach.

"Look down yonder," she said, softly.

I peered through the trees; away in the distance, a lovely picture set in a frame of blossoming shrubs and vines, stood little Lady Dorothy and Roger Trevor: she standing with drooping head, her hands nervously playing with some flowers; he bending forward, talking eagerly. Oh, the whole story was clear!

I am ashamed to admit it, but my first feeling was one of unreasoning anger against Roger, then a sense of injury where Dorothy was concerned; then both unworthy feelings died before the thought that our child had found her hero, and that he was worthy of her.

I stared at Demaris, and she stared at me; there were tears in her eyes—I dare say there were in mine.

"We are two old fools," she said, with a laugh and a sob struggling in her voice, and showing by her words that she had read my thoughts: "two old fools; but we needn't be two selfish ones, Greg—and we won't, either."

"Indeed we will not," I answered, and we shook hands—we had fought and won our battle.

We both held our peace; neither of the young pair offered us any confidence, whereat I felt a little hurt again.

"He has never said a word to her,"

Demaris assured me; "never a word. I am not certain she understands yet—but he does!"

It was the first of November. Roger had gone to New York, to meet a newly-arrived partner of the Jamaica firm. Roger's future would be decided before he returned. He did not come, the day we expected him; the evening post brought a letter—to tell me that, after all the promises, the opening was not given. A new proposition had been made—he was to go to India; but the position was an inferior one, and the climate presented a great drawback.

"Dorothy has had a letter," my sister rushed in to tell me, before I could break my news. "She has not said a word, but I know Roger has spoken at last."

"Spoken at last!" I echoed. "A pretty time to speak—how dared he! Take Dorothy to India, to be bitten by cobras and eaten by tigers—are you mad?"

"Take Dorothy to India?" repeated she, dazedly.

"He has to go—the other scheme has failed," I groaned; "but Dorothy is not to go with him—I know that."

Demaris burst into tears; I don't think I had heard her cry for forty years—it frightened me! Out of the room she rushed, and I shut myself in. After I had gone to bed that night, my sister entered softly, leaned over me, and whispered:

"We won't be selfish, either!"

Before I could find any voice to reply, she was gone.

The next morning, I went to New York, found Roger at his hotel, and a terrible state of mind he was in—making ready to start for San Francisco at once, and to sail from thence for India.

"But you must be crazy—you can't take Dorothy there!" I cried, and then stopped, remembering that he had never told me he wished to take her anywhere. I had intended to be very diplomatic, show great tact, get round to the subject gradually, and induce him to tell me the whole story; and here I had blurted out the most unfortunate thing I could say.

"Dorothy has told me so already," Roger answered; "I got her letter early this morning. I suppose I am selfish, but I can't think she is right—I cannot!"

Before we had done, I saw the letter, and I think one more beautiful never was written. Dorothy loved him, but he must go forth alone—nor would she hold out any hope. Her life belonged to Demaris and me; she could never know happiness if she deserted us, who had been father and mother to her.

"She will marry me, if ever I can afford to make a home here," said Roger, bitterly; "I should say, with my present prospects, I may be ready to do that about fifty years hence."

It was late in the afternoon when I reached home again; Roger was with me. Demaris met us in the veranda; Dorothy came timidly in her wake.

"Here is a young man who is going to manage an orange-grove in Florida," said I, before anybody else could speak. "I have been thinking for months, Demaris, that I would buy one; a capital opportunity offered, and I've seized it. Roger joins me as a partner—on a percentage, at first; he can buy the whole concern later—and you and I will spend the winters down there, if—Dorothy will let us."

But the little maid had fled indoors, and Roger followed her.

ONE OF THE RANDOLPHS.

BY ANNE HATHAWAY.



AM a plain man, and make no pretension to literary style. What follows in this narrative is the heart-history of two lives lived a century ago, and written mainly by their own hands. My connection

with them is briefly told:

I, Arthur Carrington, a middle-aged physician of modern Athens, was called to minister to a dying woman, a stranger. After doing what I could to ease her last hours, for I could not prolong them, she reposed in me a sacred trust: a bundle of papers, yellow with age, and the faded miniature of a lovely young woman. I accepted it, as often in my professional life I am called upon to be the legatee of trifles; but I did not look over what proved to be letters and a journal kept in a stirring period of our national history, until death had released the soul of my patient from its suffering tenement. Even then these papers would never have seen the light of publication, had not subsequent events imparted the animating spirit to the dry bones and proved that I need not blush for the noble patriot of whom they speak, and strains of whose blood flowed in my own veins.

The events alluded to were these:

At the invitation of a friend, I passed several weeks, that same autumn, with a hunting-expedition in Pennsylvania. While tramping over historic ground in search of game, we discovered a cave whose mouth was closed by a huge boulder and concealed by clambering vines. Curiosity led us to explore it, and we were horrified to find, within, the bones of a human form. Beside them, enclosed in a glass bottle, was a letter addressed to Miss Virginia Randolph, Richmond, Virginia. The contents of the faded letter so wonderfully correlated with the story of the journal I possessed at home, that I resolved to compile this history of the most pathetic fate that ever overtook unfortunate lovers.

Extract from the journal of Miss Virginia Randolph:

MARCH 26th, 1778.—My little book, I open you with joy! There must be an outlet for my exuberant life, and when my father, dear heart, called me to his side this morning, my nineteenth birthdate, and, kissing me, placed your bright red covers in my hands, I gave him a hearty squeeze for very joy, then reached up and patted his powdered wig.

Inside your covers he had traced: "Hast thou a secret? Tell it not to thy friend, for thy friend hath also a friend, and his friend a friend." Wise counselor! But shall I, Virginia Randolph, ever have that delightful thing, a secret? My life is a succession of happy days, fraught with tender love just as these spring winds are laden with the common fragrance of the magnolia and the Judas-tree. Oh, I am so happy, so happy! My life bubbles up like a fountain of sweet waters.

MARCH 28th, 1778.—"Count no one happy until dead," writes the grim philosopher; and, when our country is in so unsettled a condition, owing to the rebellious colonies who appreciate not the favor of our good king, perhaps it would look more seemly in me to repress my gayety. At least, so says my sister Dorothy. How does it happen that two blossoms on the parent stem are as dissimilar as Dorothy and I? Even in the growth of so common a sort as the apple, its hue and juices depend much on its exposure to sunshine or shadow. Is it so with a woman's life, I wonder? My eighteen years have been sun-clad, while my sister, who is much older, has known the fell blight of my mother's death and of a bitter quarrel with her lover, that I have knowledge of only through the chattering tongue of my maid Chloe. To follow, then, my simile, Dorothy should be exposed to warm rays until her acrid nature mellows. Shall I compare my foolish life to the persimmon that is sweetened only by exposure to the frost?

APRIL 1st.—The country is sorely troubled because of the rebel patriots, who are not easily suppressed. My sister wages a bitter war with her tongue against these, whom she calls ungrateful children of a common mother. I take no side in the matter, but look upon the exploits of Washington much as I do those of Lucifer, as pictured by our blind bard, and as confidently expect to see him and his hosts put to rout.

"God will see to it that the right prevails," exclaims my father, piously, as the couriers come and go with their tidings. He has much dependence on divine aid, which tempers an otherwise haughty and implacable spirit. For were we not one of the noble families of Britain, and kinsmen to the king? I say were we not, for now we call ourselves Virginians. Through favor from the Crown, my father secured this grant of many beautiful acres, a short distance from the city of Richmond, hoping to pass his declining years in quietude, and deriving a sufficient income from the shipment of his tobacco to England.

APRIL 8th.—Hemming in our pleasant garden from the highway, stands a row of broad-girthed oak-trees, whose branches are thrust out until they touch each other like sympathetic fingers. In one of these is a curiously twisted branch like a seat, and to this nook each morning I clamber, like the hoiden I am, the pet dog Gip and my book my constant companions.

From my perch, I can see the placid course of a streamlet dimpling in the sunlight. White water-lilies lift their stately heads, as if smiling at the birds hovering over the surface. Men mounted on horses pass in the broad highway before me, often with a woman on the pillion behind them, more often carrying a bag of corn to mill, or a post-chaise with postillion riders hurries by, with a creaking clamor that disturbs our quiet.

To the left of our mansion-house stand some of our dependencies: the kitchen with its vegetable garden, the sheds and smoke-house—even the stables form a quarter by themselves that is animated by swarms of little negroes.

I had scarcely fastened my eyes upon the printed page this morning, little journal—in sooth, the prospect spread before me was more charming than twenty volumes of the

"Spectator"—when I could feel the tremulous reverberation of the earth caused by the approach of many mounted men. Soon a squad appeared, the horses throwing the dirt about them like a cloud. I could see but indistinctly, but I made out their dress to be of the Continental Regulars. I should have been unobserved, had not foolish Gip set up a most terrific barking, as if his tiny body was called upon to resent their defiant attitude toward the British. Trembling in his vehemence, he lost his foothold on my lap and fell rolling amid the galloping horses. Instantly a dozen bayonets were thrust toward him, when, forgetting my own fear, I screamed in a most unbecoming manner. A young officer—for so I knew he must have been by his superior dress—dismounted, and, picking up the ill-conditioned cur, handed him up to me unharmed. I tried to thank him, but my tongue clave to the roof of my mouth. My cheeks burn now, little journal, as I think of the quizzical smile that brightened his dark-blue eyes. He was of goodly size and fair of complexion. Something tells me I shall see him again.

APRIL 12th.—The news has just reached us, causing great consternation in our bosoms, that France has entered into a friendly alliance with the colonies, making Great Britain a common enemy. The patriots received these tidings with ill-concealed rejoicing, England with vindictive anger. War now seems inevitable, for the Boston Port Bill and the Tea Act have so enraged the people that they are eager to throw off the English yoke.

My father and sister speak contemptuously of the Continental Congress, and prophesy, in actual conflict, the result will be disastrous to the patriots' cause; for our army is well equipped and well fed, while, during the long winter, Washington's camp at Valley Forge has been the scene of terrible anguish. The moanings and complainings in the air would have deterred a less resolute commander. Report saith that thousands of soldiers were without shoes, and the frozen ground was marked with bloody footprints.

How horrible is war! The thought, I confess, of that handsome young man, who so gallantly rescued my pet animal, falling by the musket-ball, is most repugnant to me.

APRIL 20th.—The air is full of sweet scents

from the flowers; and the leaves of the old oaks have gained a deeper hue and grown so large, my bower is quite sequestered from prying eyes.

I seek this retreat each morning, thinking perhaps I shall see, among the militia passing, the face of that young man. It would be quite impossible for me ever to have speech with him, though I should much like to thank him for his kindly aid when Gip's danger was so imminent.

APRIL 21st.—This I whispered to your pages last night, my journal, never thinking that this morning I should have both sight and speech of Major Carrington. It happened this way: he was leading a detachment of cavalry past, and seemed not to throw one glance my way. My heart beat violently and my eyes were suffused with feeling. I was so bitterly disappointed that I did not notice that, after he had rode a short distance by, he dismounted, and, leaving his horse to graze, walked back. I first discovered him standing beneath my perch, his head bowed in respectful salutation.

"Your sympathies are with the right?" he said, in grave sweet tones.

"My ideas of right and yours may be at strange variance," I answered, more pertly than the occasion demanded.

"You revere the great Washington?"

"I am loyal to my king."

"It must not be, it must not be," he said, as if agitated. "I had hoped to find a friend."

What possessed me that I said boldly, though my cheeks were of the hue of blood: "Are we therefore foes?"

"Nay, little one, not so," and, tearing a button from his coat and wrapping it in a paper which he tore from his note-book and hurriedly wrote upon, he tossed it to my lap. Was it by accident entirely that my brodered kerchief fell at his feet? He picked it up and pressed it to his lips, then reverently placed it in his bosom. "Virginia Randolph" is worked in silk upon it. He will know my name, but I am already acquainted with his; for he has traced in pencil, upon the scrap of paper, "Arthur Carrington," and this button belongs to the uniform of a major in the patriot army.

So I have a secret at last: and a dangerous one, should my father or sister discover it.

MAY 7th, 1778.—Have I become that hateful thing, a traitor to my country? I go about the house shamefacedly, not daring to admit to my own heart that my allegiance to the Crown is wavering, and all because of a handsome pair of eyes. If I mistake not, my father's prejudice is weakening too; for this morning, as I sat at his knee and heard him reiterate his pious phrase, "God will see to it that the right prevails," I asked pertly if "the God of the British was not the patriots' God."

"Yes, yes, child, I suppose so," he answered, as if amused at my impertinence.

Many of the noble families of Virginia at first professed themselves in full accord with the Continental Congress, but a lingering attachment to the Crown and favors from functionaries in royal pay have undecided them.

My sister Dorothy, inured to pomp and equipage, cannot bring herself to the enjoyment of the simplicity of the patriots' life, though we have suffered much privation through our crops being seized by the patriot Philistines, and our tobacco could not be shipped, owing to the fact that the waters of the Chesapeake are held by the British fleet.

MAY 10th.—Our house has been in great confusion, for General Washington and staff have taken possession and ordered dinner served. There is a great scampering hither and thither of the servants; for my father, with the fine affability of a Virginia gentleman, has ordered prepared the best the larder affords, while my sister caused our fine napery and best service of plate to be laid for these self-invited guests. As for me, little journal, my heart is a-flutter, for my sister has carried her rancor to the extent that she will not preside at the table, and so it falls upon my young shoulders. After Chloe had dressed my hair high and powdered it after the prevailing style, and I had donned my brocade dress and high-heeled slippers, I executed a pirouette before my mirror, then tried to assume a dignity that I was far from feeling, as I sat opposite my father.

MAY 10th.—I was gratified with a view of Washington, who is tall and well built and mingles the ease and complacency of a gentleman with the air of a soldier. He took small notice of anyone but my father, with whom he conversed in measured tones;

and I was glad to hide my embarrassment under cover of eating, for next to the great Washington sat Major Carrington, who, if I mistake not, was as ill at ease as myself. Indeed, Washington rallied him upon his backward deportment toward the ladies. Major Carrington cast a burning entreating glance toward me as I withdrew and left the gentlemen to discuss their wine, that has set my heart to beating so violently that I have locked myself in my room that I can better compose myself, though privately I am sure to contemplate the fine face of Arthur—nay, Major Carrington.

A knocking at the door startles me. Fie, fie, miss! thy guilty air betrays thee; it is but Chloe, whose boisterous mirth I cannot brook to-day. She brings me a bunch of lilies-of-the-valley and a note that, after many contortions of her face, she fishes from the pocket of her gown.

Oh, what joy and fervor in life!

A note from Major Carrington to Miss Virginia Randolph:

“SWEET MAIDEN: MAY 10th, 1778.

There is graven on my heart a picture whose beauty tempts me often to reflection during the weary marches: a sunny face surrounded by an aureole of floating curls, mischievous eyes that peep like those of a dryad from the green of an old oak-tree. As I approach, I find the nymph human and carrying a ridiculous assumption of dignity upon her girlish face, so that I scarcely dare address her. Though her manner repelled me, yet her eyes invited, and the pouting lips urged though they did not move. I know no victor but the patriots' cause, no fear but that of God; yet, curiously enough, I surrender to this fair face and fragile form.

Will the strong champion of her king meet a poor patriot 'neath the old oak to-night at eleven, lest in the providence of God we may not meet again, and I have somewhat to say to her.

ARTHUR CARRINGTON.”

MAY 11th, 1778.—There has something happened. A great joy fills my heart. How can I tell thee, little journal? I am the betrothed wife of Arthur Carrington—him who in his grave demeanor most resembles

the great Washington. It was after eleven when I stole from my room last night, for I had not concluded to accede to his request for a meeting, though I dissembled a headache and sought my bed early that I might debate this question. The moon shone in upon me in calm splendor, throwing its beams upon the polished floor. The curtains swayed toward me, moved by the night winds, as if they were imploring hands—Arthur's hands. At last, I dressed myself with hasty fingers and stole down the broad staircase, fearing lest my footsteps be heard on the polished floor, past the fire-place where the embers still smoldered, and out the front door, startled at my own shadow, and across the shrubbery to the old oak. A tall form came out of the gloom, and Major Carrington, without further ado, told me his love and turned night into day. He talked long of how his life first belonged to his country, and the dangers to which he was constantly exposed, and how he hated the circumstances that made a clandestine meeting necessary to us from fear of my father's wrath.

“Now, little one,” he said, “if there were no great question of right and wrong at stake, or if I were a servant of the Crown, what would you say?”

“Arthur! Arthur!” I cried.

“Virginia,” he whispered, in a voice husky with tears, as he took me in his arms, “before daybreak, I shall be far away; but God is good: whatever comes, do not doubt that. I know we shall meet again, my best beloved—Virginia!”

We stood wrapped in this warm embrace for a few moments, then, taking from his pocket a golden locket in which lay one of his crisp yellow curls, he fastened it about my neck; then, kissing me fervently again, he put me from him, and, covering his face, groaned mightily. Trembling, I retraced my footsteps through the gay parterre of flowers, and at the door I turned, and by the moonlight glimmering through the shrubbery I thought I saw him move, and a tremulous sigh seemed to come floating toward me. I held out my arms toward him. I ran back, stumbling through the dew-drenched flowers, to the spot; but it was vacant. I looked again; it must have been the wind-stirred Judas-tree I saw, and the sighing air that I heard.

Letter to Miss Virginia Randolph, which she never received, and written under peculiar circumstances.

"MAY 20th, 1778.

MY BELOVED VIRGINIA: In despair that I shall ever see your loved lineaments again, I write these lines, praying that God will bless you. A great fear is upon me that you will never see this letter; for, out foraging, I was fired upon by British soldiers. I sought this cave for safety, but a huge stone has fallen over its mouth, shutting me in a living tomb. Escape is impossible without someone should hear my cries, and I have called until I am hoarse; the echoes cast back my shrieks in hollow mockery. The bitterness of it all is, that our joy should be of so short duration and you will feel that I am a recreant lover. I have been walled in here what must have been two days already, though I can keep no track of time, and it seems an eternity. I have only a part of a biscuit left, and such strange fantasies surge in my brain that I pen this letter to you before I go utterly mad. Thank God for writing materials! I will place these lines in a glass bottle, that they may at least survive this poor body, though they may never reach your sight.

God is good; God is merciful, to let you seem so near me. You are praying for me now, at this moment: I feel it—I know it is so, my beloved. It is not farewell—I cannot say farewell; there is no farewell to love like ours. This agony will soon be over, and I will be free; I will be waiting for you in the land of the hereafter. Virginia, my best beloved, I am almost there, and something tells me I shall not have to wait long for your coming.

ARTHUR L. CARRINGTON."

From the journal of Virginia Randolph:

APRIL 30th, 1779.—The trials and deprivations of another winter are almost over. I busy myself with the affairs of our household, but my spirit is slain, for no word has ever reached me from Arthur Carrington since he departed with Washington.

I feel that Arthur Carrington is slain, though his name has not appeared among the list, incomplete at best, of the dead and mortally wounded. Sometimes I feel that Dorothy, with misguided zeal, has destroyed any tidings of him that may have come.

She seems to have grown sterner and more censorious toward me since our stormy conversation in which she revealed to me her knowledge of what she called my "despicable intrigue with a patriot." Though methinks her eyes soften when they rest upon me lately, for I have grown both thin and pale.

MAY 1st, 1779.—Mr. James Clinton, an honorable gentleman and a British officer, is with us again. He remained closeted with my father during the morning. This evening, he sits with us by the big fire-place. I am picking an indifferent tune from my spinet, though despair is eating to the core of my heart. Dorothy sits on the other side, diligently stitching wristbands for my father's shirts. To-day, I walked weakly down to the old oaks and stood beneath their branches. The bursting flower-buds and the soft spring air conjured up my parting with Arthur there. A step, and Mr. James Clinton stood beside me and made me a formal offer of his hand and heart. I burst into tears.

"Oh, sir," I said, "my heart is with my lover—my lover who fills a patriot's grave. His love was not a trifling—" but I stopped abruptly, all a-tremble. Why apologize to him for Arthur's sorrow and mine?

MAY 2d, 1779.—There is news to-day. Dorothy is betrothed to Mr. Clinton. It seems she has loved him long, but praised my few virtues and strove nobly that this gallant officer might choose me as mistress of his home. It was beautiful and unselfish in her, and we are so far reconciled that she has kissed me.

How different am I, dear little book, from the joyous girl that penned your pages a year ago. Within is transcribed the history of my whole life, for I have only lived since I knew Arthur. My limbs grow weaker every day. Fie on thee, poor little body, to be so influenced by an affair of the heart! I know that Arthur is dead; but God is good, and we shall meet again.

In an old burying-ground near the city of Richmond, there stands to-day, beneath the green of the tall eucalyptus-tree, a monument. The inscription on the marble is overgrown with moss and hard to decipher, but a close observer can trace the following:

"Died, of a broken heart, on the first of May, 1779, Virginia Randolph, aged 20 years and 9 days. Faithful unto death."

SISTER DOROTHY.

BY EDGAR FAWCETT,

AUTHOR OF "AN AMBITIOUS WOMAN," "A GENTLEMAN OF LEISURE," ETC.

WHEN her only sister, Sara, was married in New York to Mr. Larchmont Bartlett, the intelligence of this event reached Dorothy Truman among the lovely mountains of Lucerne. Dorothy at once wrote home a crisp characteristic letter.

"Haven't you hurried up matters marvelously?" the letter ran. "It seems to me only yesterday that I heard of this engagement, and now it is a marriage. I have not an idea what Mr. Larchmont Bartlett is like, though you sent me that beautiful photograph. The only use for photographs, I find, is to have them remind you of people. If you expect that they will enable you to do anything more, you are always sorely mistaken. My warmest congratulations, of course—I mean, or I ought to mean, for the man who has been lucky enough to win my beloved and incomparable little Sara. . . . This place is a dream of beauty, in May. I am living in a cheap 'pension'—eight francs a day—with all sorts of odd people; but, then, think of having Mount Pilatus, the big gray sentinel of all the other Alps, greet you every morning from your bed-room window, sometimes doffing his cap of cloud to you in the most chivalrous way. . . . Expect me home in two months, at least. Mrs. Bondurant is growing homesick, poor woman, now that her other malady is cured, and thinks more and more every day of her transpontine spouse and babes. It is wonderful, dear Sara, how our sentiment increases with our appetite. . . . Love to mamma, and tell her I can scarcely understand how I have permitted her to be so long out of my sight. Love to papa, and tell him that I shall meet all further messages on the subject of an increased letter of credit with severe silence; I have not yet spent half what he has given me. . . ."

Sara read a few sentences from this letter, to her newly-married husband. It was just after the return from their honeymoon. They had come back to the house of Sara's parents; they were to live here; the whole of the second floor of this handsome brown-stone mansion in Fifty-seventh Street had been allotted them, making five spacious rooms in all. Mr. and Mrs. Truman had gone one flight further upstairs for their accommodation.

Larchmont Bartlett, who was seated at the side

of his young wife, took this letter of her sister Dorothy's somewhat languidly from Sara's hand, and surveyed through his eyeglasses its square secure chirography. He had a long yellow mustache, a diminutive and dainty sort of nose, a lank thin figure, extremely slender white hands, and the air of always dressing himself with an eye to the reigning mode. And yet you would not—despite even the eyeglasses—have permitted yourself to call him a mere dandy. It might even have occurred to you that he was a person of considerable interred, repressed, covert ability—which he was. When a fool gives himself absolutely up to the grasp and sweep of "caste," as an idea, we never have the least doubt about the completeness of the surrender. But it is otherwise with a man of brains. Intellect always dies hard, and there are few modes of absolutely hiding it. The most zealous worshiper of patrician forms will invariably betray it. He wears his robes of office just a little awry. His fatuity does not perfectly fit him, like the supple native idiocy of the born fop.

Larchmont Bartlett regarded Dorothy's letter for some little time. His glasses were not an affectation; he was near-sighted to a most inconvenient degree.

"I can understand, my dear Sara," he at length said, "that your sister is a very different sort of person from yourself." He said it with a drawl; but there have often been more relentless elongations of English syllables than that which he gave, and affectation has arts of speech beyond any of those he employed.

"Different?" echoed Sara. "I think no two people could be more unlike in every way." This statement might have been construed unfavorably toward the absent Dorothy; though Sara, in her guileless geniality, never dreamed of dispraise. She herself was a blonde of the willowy fragile type; all the pure candor of her soul seemed to look forth from the lucent mellow blue of her eyes; and, with hair so golden and so rippling, with cheeks and chin so finely and softly molded, with a figure whose liteness retained so many gracious curves, she had every right to be called a beauty.

"But I am very anxious for you to like my

sister, Larch," the young bride pursued, in a tenderer tone. "You do think that you will like her, don't you?" And here Sara put one hand on her husband's arm, and sought for his evading eyes.

"What on earth made her go to Europe in that cheap way?" muttered Larchmont.

"Poor Mrs. Bondurant had bronchitis dangerously, and couldn't go in any other."

"Who is Mrs. Bondurant? Rather a common sort of person, eh?"

Sara would not have called her mother's old friend a common sort of person six months ago. But now it was somehow different. She had, meanwhile, met Larchmont Bartlett, been wooed by him, and married him. She now said, with a stealthy little blush of guilt and a hesitating voice:

"Well, Larch, I should not call her common. No. She hasn't the—ah—fashionable air, and—"

"My dear Sara, don't use that dreadful word 'fashionable.' It always makes me hear the snipping of a milliner's scissors."

Sara laughed buoyantly. "I am afraid, if I said 'swell,' Larch, you'd think it slangy."

"Say 'respectable.' It answers every purpose."

Sara gave a sudden start. "Good gracious!" she exclaimed. "Mrs. Bondurant is respectable!"

"Is she? Well, let us drop her, and talk of something else. As for this matter of liking your sister, my dear, it will all depend upon how she accepts me. Do you understand?"

Sara thought, reverently, that she did understand. Larchmont, with perhaps an unconscious vanity, had alluded to himself as if he were a new religion or a piece of recent political reform. And possibly his wife, in a certain undefined way, placed him on a level with just such notable questions as these.

The home-coming of Dorothy Truman was not without its dramatic accompaniments. She looked all about her, so to speak, after crossing the threshold of her father's house, with alertly-poised head and vigilant wary eye. She had a face full of vivacity and spirit, and a good deal of her sister's neat flexibility in figure, without a trace of Sara's inseparable languor. Indeed, briskness was the most emphatic trait of all that Dorothy said and did; it was never absent from her manner and speech, any more than its salty tang is absent from sea-water. Some of the people who are always judging a woman by her possibility of winning male admirers used to say of Dorothy that spinsterhood held earlier and keener threats for her than for most girls, she

was so independent, so accentuated, so sharp. Now, they asserted, her youth dyed all this in a rosy mist; but, when the mist faded, too little yielding femininity would be left behind it. If Dorothy ever heard an echo of these comments, it may be set down as certainty that she merely laughed her silent contempt for them. It had always seemed to her highly possible that she would never marry. She had a good many theories as to what men ought to be, and she knew very well that men do not like the women who have those. The woman who represents recreation and not discipline to the mind masculine is she who walks to church, under a bridal-veil, the quickest. And, if a man were like the sun and moon made into one, Dorothy had often told herself she would not marry him without genuine love.

She had not been home more than three hours before her whole individuality was in a stir and flutter. She considered Larchmont Bartlett odious, and thought Sara had made the most mistaken of matches. At dinner, that evening, Mr. and Mrs. Truman exchanged more than one melancholy glance. They had dreaded that the coming of Dorothy would summon discord from its lair, and they had not been in error. It must be admitted that both Sara's parents were, somehow, under the spell of their son-in-law's magnificence. He had so dazzled them, that they had forgotten to disapprove of him. Years ago, when her husband had made his first valiant pile of thousands, in the retail hardware business, Mrs. Truman had attempted to secure a foothold in so-called patrician New York society.

But she had never forgotten the attempt, poor woman. She made a tour of the summer watering-places with her husband, that year, and they must both have cut very sorry figures. It is possible that his tailor was as much to blame as her dressmaker. Mrs. Truman was now dimly conscious of wearing rings outside of her gloves, during this momentous pilgrimage, and Mr. Truman could remember that he generally attired himself in evening-dress at about two o'clock in the afternoon. The years, and their daughters who grew up with the years, had brought radical changes. Mrs. Truman had learned why she had failed, with all her wealth, to "get into society." She had carried away with her, from that disastrous campaign, a good deal of potent chagrin; but she had carried away, as well, a keen respect for "the aristocracy." Nor had matters been very different with her husband. Mr. Truman's estimate of his own social importance underwent a change from which it never recovered. He realized,

after that summer, how there were certain things which his money could not give him or do for him. Like his wife, he grew to secretly reverence high social standing, and gradually acquainted himself with the various family-records and personal histories included under such august Knickerbocker names as those of "Amsterdam" or "Manhattan." Sara had, in a measure, shared these feelings, and several years spent at a school filled with the daughters of New York nabobs had by no means diminished them. But Dorothy had always tossed her head in great scorn at the idea of anyone possessing them. She dearly loved both of her parents, but hid this fondness under a frank familiarity, which, to many an English eye, might have seemed the essence of filial disrespect. Dorothy, however, would not have minded the mute censure of all the English eyes in the world. She had always prided herself upon being an American of Americans, and her recent trip abroad had only intensified this national sympathy.

"Which country in Europe do you like the best, Dorothy?" asked Sara, that evening, as they were seated at dinner.

"Oh, Switzerland," was the answer, made without a moment of hesitation. "I believe there is no country in the world half so beautiful."

Larchmont gave one of his thin cool laughs. "It is so spectacular," he said, "it always makes me think of a chromo, or something like that."

Dorothy pursed her lips a little. "It is popular and healthful," she said, in crisp undertone, "and so the dainty people run it down." Then her black eyes sparkled a little, as she went on with changed voice: "But this modern fashion of sneering at it will die away, and its sublimity and grandeur will remain. I met some people who spoke as you did, by the way; but I afterward found out that they had done so entirely from affectation."

"Oh, Dorothy!" murmured Sara, with an alarmed look at her husband.

"Dorothy does not mean to be uncivil, I am sure," hastened Mrs. Truman.

"I fear that I am often thought so, when I tell the plain truth," said Dorothy.

"The plain truth shouldn't always be spoken, my dear," said her father, with a kind of nervous jocoseness.

"I can't bear to hear my beloved Switzerland talked of in that snobbish way," declared Dorothy.

"I thought you were such a very loyal American," said Larchmont, only half concealing a sneer.

"A loyal American!" cried Dorothy, gayly. "Loyalty is no word for me. If I were ashamed of my own country—like some Americans whom I have met in London and elsewhere—I should be ashamed of myself."

"You seem to have met some rather unsatisfactory people, across the ocean," said Larchmont, with his drawl made skillfully tantalizing.

Dorothy now felt distinctly nettled, and at once said: "Unfortunately, not all of them are to be found across the ocean."

At the end of dinner, after she had fired not a few peppery little shots of this same sort, Dorothy was privately interviewed by her mother.

"My dear," said Mrs. Truman, "it looks as if you were going to make matters very unpleasant for Larchmont."

Dorothy steadily regarded her mother for some little time. Then she answered, with a slight pained smile at the corners of her lips, and a series of quick little reproachful nods:

"Oh, it does, does it, mamma? And then you don't think your son-in-law at all blamable for the way he treated me?"

"Larchmont's manners are perfection," said Mrs. Truman, with an airy sort of reverence, as though she were saying colloquially a fragment of some sacred litany.

"He has no manners at all," exclaimed Dorothy. "He is all mannerism. I detest such a type of man as that."

"Dorothy!"

"And to think that our darling Sara should have married him!" Here the tears flashed in Dorothy's eyes, as she vehemently tossed her head. "She never should have done it, if I had been home—never!"

Mrs. Truman clasped both hands together, in a grief-stricken way. She was a very silly woman, and the pernicious snobbery of our metropolis, with which fate had brought her into contact, had made her still sillier.

"Oh, Dorothy!" she moaned. "It was such a splendid match for our Sara! Your father was delighted, and so was I. Why, only think: his mother was a Castlegarden, and his grandmother was a Brooklynheight! He couldn't be more swell than he is. It puts our family right up. Why, I just mentioned casually, this winter, to Larchmont, that your father and I would like to go to one of the Patriarchs' balls, and he got us cards so easily! And 'everybody' has called on Sara since the wedding. Some days, we would have a perfect stream of carriages in front of the house, for the whole afternoon. You couldn't help remembering that the neighbors must be watching, behind their shades. And there was

that Mrs. Pillsbee, next door, who never returned my visit, seeing it all! I declare, Dorothy, there's so much to be downright grateful for, and yet here are you coming home to turn a blessing into a trouble."

"That's a cheerful way of describing my arrival," said Dorothy, as she bit her lips. The bald rude straightforwardness of her mother's discourse was nothing new to her; she had heard other gentle tirades in just the same glaring taste as this. "Mamma," she now went on, "answer me one question: Is Mr. Larchmont Bartlett a person of any means whatever?"

"Not much," said Mrs. Truman, coloring a little.

"I thought not," asseverated Dorothy. "This marriage has been simply a downright sale—nothing more."

"Oh, Dorothy Truman!" cried her mother, in burning anger. "How can you—and how dare you?"

Here Dorothy threw both arms around her mother's neck. But she did not kiss her; she scolded her, instead.

"Oh, you goose! You foolish stupid old goose, you! Between papa and yourself, you may have shattered poor Sara's life. I don't know how I can ever forgive either of you. Do you suppose I don't already see just how matters stand? You've gone down on your knees—all three—before this shallow, pompous, conceited young fortune-hunter. And what does he give you, in exchange for your devotion? A languid half-amused contempt!"

"Contempt? Oh, Dorothy!"

"It's true. I mean to watch his conduct toward Sara narrowly enough, you may be sure of that. What this marriage will mean to Sara is, after all, the important question. I saw that he left the house almost immediately after dinner, this evening."

"He must have been annoyed at you," said Mrs. Truman. "He usually goes an hour later."

"Oh," said Dorothy, "then he usually does go, eh?"

"Well, yes."

"With Sara, or without?"

"He hasn't taken Sara much lately."

"Oh, he hasn't? And does he tell her where he goes?"

"Yes. He goes to his club—the Gramercy Club, you know. It is the most select in New York: smaller than the Metropolitan, and nearly all made up from our very first families. And he has promised to use all his best influence to have your father made a member of the Gramercy."

"Indeed?" muttered Dorothy. "What a pretty figure he'll cut, among all those popinjays."

To her father, Dorothy was equally outspoken, though in a different way. "Upon my word," she affirmed, "you don't deserve to have the enviable repute that you possess, as a man of brains and honesty. The idea of caring for this fiction—this phantom—this will-o'-the-wisp they call caste! You! In a smaller man, one could forgive such a smallness. Why, these so-called American aristocrats are the surprise and the ridicule of Europe. And to let our Sara marry that mere fashion-plate of a man, simply because he can take his wife among the snobs of the F. C. D. C. Dancing-class without having to cringe and struggle getting her there! Oh, it's petty, and at the same time monstrous!"

"Look here, Dorothy," said that young lady's father, laying one hand on her shoulder: "You're going to make trouble in this house—I can see it in your eyes."

"I'm going to prevent trouble," said Dorothy, stolidly, "if I can."

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Truman, with the bluntness of a man whom subtleties irritate.

"You shall see, father," said Dorothy. She was always very serious, very much in earnest, when she called him "Father," like this.

"Now, Dorothy," said Mr. Truman, showing a burst of that firmness which he could maintain so capably where it was a question of will and opinion going together, with all except this energetic young daughter of his, "now, Dorothy, you just listen to me, and let well alone. Sara is getting on nicely enough with Larchmont. She and he understand one another perfectly."

"Oh, they do?" said Dorothy, with scathing irony. Several days had now elapsed since her conversation with her mother, and she had, meanwhile, used a good deal of shrewd though covert observation. "Do you call it 'understanding one another perfectly,' to be on dog-and-master terms? Sara is completely neglected by her husband, and yet so much in awe of his assumed greatness that she does not, for an instant, venture to complain. How long can this sort of thing go on? Until her gentle patience gives way at last under the pressure of that man's cold-blooded selfishness? Then all remedies will arrive too late. As it is, there is some hope of saving Sara's future. That hope rests entirely in appeal to her husband. Such an appeal I must, and shall, make."

Mr. Truman heaved a sigh. There was no use of opposing Dorothy when her mood took this

resolute and sybilline aspect. He had himself begun secretly to chafe under the "de haut en bas" attitude of his son-in-law. There was, nowadays, a certain patronage in the way Larchmont condescended to seat himself at the Truman dinner-table, occupy his sumptuous apartments, even draw the generous allowance made by his wife's father.

"Dorothy's right," at length declared Mr. Truman to his wife. "It mustn't go on like this forever. If Dorothy could only win Sara into trusting her, and even joining forces with her, the chances of success would be much better."

"But, Ira—" began his wife.

"You trust our Dorothy, Adeline. She loves Sara, heart and soul, and we know it. All we can do is look on and see the fight. We can't take sides with her, I suppose, because she won't let us."

Dorothy had a very difficult time before she could move by a single inch Sara's rooted loyalty to her husband. But she knew very well that some such dislocation as this must now be effected, or a tumultuous ruin would soon follow in its place.

"Be as devotedly and as deeply fond of this man as you can be," she said, "and, the fonder you are, the more sincerely glad will it make me. But, Sara, to let him treat you as he is doing proves no love on your own part. Who sees you abroad at his side? You valued his 'position'—Dorothy could never even pronounce any of these words, expressing patrician rank, without a certain bellicose tartness of tone—"you valued his 'position,' I say, when you married him; but now you are not reaping a single advantage from it. I don't declare that he merely holds you 'something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse'; but I do declare, my sister, that he thrusts you out of sight, as if he were ashamed of you. If he had married you, not loving you, he would have been committing a cowardly, a villainous act. I do not think he did this. No. I have watched him closely, and I believe that he does care for you sincerely, at heart. But he makes you drop into the place of an inferior; he does not let you hold, beside him, the place of an equal. It reminds me of those morganatic marriages in Europe: you are only half his wife. Mamma spoke of the stream of people who called upon you. But who calls now? Larchmont prefers that you should not pay visits. To pay visits means to receive them, and both together mean being 'in society.' But Larchmont does not want you to be 'in society.' It necessitates the bore of taking you about; and

that he shrinks from. He is in society' himself, and—I must say it, Sara—papa's money enables him to enjoy himself there."

Poor Sara's lip quivered. She wanted to resent her sister's words, and yet there was a tenderness in Dorothy's look and mien which forbade such a course. Then, too, the voice which now addressed her seemed like an audible corroboration of her own growing fears. She dropped her eyes for a moment, and sat quite silent, knowing that her sister watched her. Then, as she suddenly raised them, Dorothy saw that they swam in tears.

"Oh, Dorothy," she exclaimed, while her voice fell pitifully, "I'm—I'm glad you think that he still really loves me!"

About a week later, on a certain Monday evening, as Larchmont Bartlett entered the drawing-room, in his usual full-dress, he found his sister-in-law standing near a table, on which lay two brilliant and costly-looking bouquets.

"Pretty, aren't they?" said Dorothy, carelessly.

"Yes," said Larchmont. Meanwhile, he had seen that Dorothy's attire was of unaccustomed richness: She was, by no means, above the wearing of a handsome gown now and then, and rather prided herself upon following the prevalent fashion without going conspicuously beyond it. "Are they your flowers?" her brother-in-law added.

"One bunch is mine," said Dorothy, "and one is Sara's." She began to draw on a pair of long white gloves as she thus spoke.

"Sara's?" repeated Larchmont.

"Yes. We're going to the opera together. It's 'Carmen.' I am passionately fond of 'Carmen.' I've taken a box for Sara and myself." Larchmont changed color. "I saw my wife at dinner," he said, almost under his breath, "as you are aware. She did not, then, mention any such plan."

"No?" said Dorothy, who was coolness itself. "I suppose she forgot. You forget to mention so many of your plans to her."

She saw an exasperated look cross his face, as he walked several steps away from her. "Won't you come with us?" she now asked. "It's one of those small boxes, you know; but we shall have two empty seats."

He was pale, as he turned toward her again. "Excuse me," he said, visibly biting his lip; "you will have three, I think—my wife's, as well."

Dorothy smiled, and threw back her head a little. "You are mistaken," she said. "Ah, here is Sara now."

Sara was indeed just then entering the drawing-room. She looked very pretty, in a dress of soft blue material, garnished with ample puffs of more ethereal texture. She gave a slight start, on seeing her husband, but glided at once to her sister's side.

"Here is your bouquet," said Dorothy, handing her one of the two nosegays. "White and pink will just make the right contrast with your dress."

There was a silence, while Sara bent her face down toward the flowers. And then her husband broke the silence, saying:

"Sara, may I ask why you have not consulted me about this proposed evening at the opera?"

Sara's voice was firm, as she answered, looking mildly but unflinchingly at the speaker:

"You go where you please, evening after evening, and never consult me. I took your indifference on the subject for granted."

"I see," said Larchmont, as if he were speaking between his teeth. "You have made a singular error, my dear. I forbid you to go to the opera, in this way."

"You forbid!" cried Dorothy, with a high burst of laughter. "Oh, that is too delicious. Ah, there's the carriage; I heard it stop outside; and here is Marie, with our opera-cloaks."

The presence of the servant, who had now appeared, wrought at least a momentary effect on Larchmont's gathering wrath. He stood and stared at his wife, while she allowed herself to be wrapped in the cashmere cloak Marie extended. But, just as Sara had begun to button it, he walked up to her side and said, in a husky voice which hardly seemed his own:

"Remove that cloak. You remain at home. I command you."

As the last word left him, Dorothy slipped between himself and his wife.

"Let me see you dare to keep her home, Larchmont Bartlett—that's all," she said, very quietly. "Sara has no enjoyment—none whatever. You neglect her, and now you blame her for seeking her own pleasures. I say she

shall go. Now, let us see who is the stronger—you or I."

He drew backward, and his face became quite colorless. "I am speaking to my wife," he said.

"And I am speaking to you," shot in Dorothy.

"You have no rights of interference—none whatever."

"Then I will assume them. I happened to know and love my sister a good many years before you married her. You've had matters entirely your own way, in this house, quite long enough. I don't propose to see Sara crushed and buried by you any longer. Oh, I'm not in the least manner awed by either your frowns or your sneers. Sara is going to the opera with me, this evening. Please understand that. This evening!"

And here Dorothy drew her sister's unresisting arm determinedly within her own.

"You shall repent this vulgarity," said Larchmont, in a choked voice.

Dorothy gave one of her laughs.

"Vulgarity!" she echoed. "That is always the way men of your absurd views treat any woman who speaks her mind, and urges her common rights. To have a particle of real spirit is to be 'vulgar.' The word comes to your lips as easily as the brandy you sip at your clubs. And, if it isn't 'vulgar,' it's 'American.' Now, be good enough, always henceforward, to realize that I'm as vulgar and as American as possible. It may save a great deal of future misunderstanding between us. Come, Sara."

She led her sister to the door of the drawing-room, with a high head and a firm step. But, just as they both reached the threshold, Larchmont hurried several paces after them.

"I'll make you regret this, Dorothy Truman," he exclaimed. "Mark my words, I will."

"I don't want to miss the first act of 'Carmen,'" said Dorothy, with another laugh, looking at him across one shoulder. "I'll see you later."

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]

THE MYSTERY AT BLACKWOOD GRANGE.

* BY THE AUTHOR OF "SIR NOEL'S HEIR."

CHAPTER I.

KEEPING TRYST.

I PAUSE an instant on the threshold of this story. You will call it, perhaps, incredible, impossible. Do it so—but it is true. Twenty years ago its principal incidents were wonderingly chronicled in every paper the length and breadth of the land. Incredible it sounds—true it is. It is but one more proof of the veracity of that hackneyed axiom—"truth is stranger than fiction,"

A raw and gusty March day was closing in a rawer and gustier twilight. One lurid bar of blood-red streaked the black sky where the sun had set wrathfully; all else was murky, troubled, darkness. A wailing wind moaned through the gaunt trees, and sent the March dust whirling in blinding clouds before it. In the ominous sky, in the groaning blast, the coming storm, heralded its approach.

The five P. M. train from Boston came thundering into the dull, little station of Hollisville. The lamps flared in the numberless draughts, and the little way-station looked unutterably dismal and desolate in the eerie gloaming. Half a dozen stragglers lounged about, hands deep in their pockets, hats drawn far over their eyes, waiting to see the passengers alight.

There was but one. A tall young man, with a light overcoat thrown across his arm sprang off, and walked into the station. "All aboard," shouted the conductor; and with a demoniac shriek the train plunged forward, and was lost in the blackening evening.

The half-dozen stragglers turned their twelve eyes upon the tall young man with the overcoat—a stranger to them—a stranger in Hollisville. A handsome and gentlemanly fellow, with dark, bright eyes, a black mustache, and a magnificent ring blazing on his ungloved left hand. It flashed like a great eye of fire as he stood under one of the gas-jets and lit a segar.

"Nasty night, sir," suggested the station-master, rather impressed by this superb stranger: "we'll have it hot and heavy before morning."

The stranger nodded carelessly, blew a fragrant cloud of smoke in the face of the nearest straggler, walked to the door, and looked long and earnestly down the road. The dull little

village (dull at its best and brightest) was unspeakably forlorn and forsaken this bleak March evening. Not even a stray dog wandered through its one long, straggling street; everybody was shut up behind those lighted windows, in square, white, wooden dwellings, with the inevitable green blinds—houses as much alike as peas in a pod.

The stranger shrugged his shoulders significantly.

"A gay and festive place, this Hollisville of yours, my friend. Existence dragged out here must be a priceless boon. There's an hotel, I suppose?"

"Five of 'em," replied the station-master, triumphantly; "the Hollisville House, the 'Farmers' Home, the United States, the——"

"That will do. Which is the best?"

"Well, the Hollisville's the dearest and the nearest—and a pretty fair hotel, I reckon. There it stands, sir, with them air beeches in front of it."

"Thanks; I'll try it. Whereabouts does Miss Hardenbrook live?"

"Miss Hardenbrook? Well, you can't see Miss Hardenbrook's from here; it's pretty nigh 'tother end of the village. Be you a friend of Miss Hardenbrook's, stranger?" with a curious stare.

The young man laughed, a peculiar short laugh, as he flung away his segar, and invested himself in his overcoat.

"I don't know about that. If I'm not, however, it's Miss Hardenbrook's fault; I'm not at all proud. Good-evening to you."

He strode away; the stragglers watched him out of sight.

"Not proud, ain't you?" said the station-master; "maybe not, but you're pretty considerable cheeky. What's he to Miss Hardenbrook, I wonder? She never has no visitors."

"One of her handsome niece's city beaux, I calk'late," suggested one.

"Miss Hardenbrook's very poorly to-day," another remarked. "She ain't expected to live the week out. Miss Isabel will drop into a good thing when the old girl goes off the hooks. She'll be the richest and handsomest gal in Massachusetts."

"And this young chap, with the black mus-

tache and diamond ring, comes down beforehand to make sure of his game. A fortune-hunter, or a gambler, most likely. They all look like that—black mustaches, diamond rings, tall hats, and lots of cheek."

The young man, thus unflatteringly discussed, reached the hotel, meantime, secured his room, ordered his supper, and ate it with an appetite. His watch pointed to six as he came from the table. It was quite dark now—moonless and starless; a bleak, bitter night.

"Pleasant this," the young man muttered, "an inky sky above, an inky earth below. My dear girl will hardly venture out in this March tornado; but, like a true knight, I must brave the elements, and be at the place of tryst."

He buttoned up his overcoat, drew his hat far over his eyes, and sallied out into the gusty darkness. There were no street lamps in primitive Hollisville; and the lighted windows were so obscured by tossing trees, that they illuminated his path but little. The park was strange to him, too; but he plunged carelessly forward with an easy trust in luck and himself, that was characteristic of the man, humming the fag end of an old ballad.

"My father he has locked the door,
My mother keeps the key;
But neither bolts nor bars can part
My own true love and me."

"Oh, hang it!" as he stumbled over an obstruction. "Miss Hardenbrook would lock the door and keep the key, too, if she dreamed George Wildair was within a score of miles of this delectable, happy village. I hope Issie will keep tryst; one doesn't mind breaking one's shins for the girl of one's heart; but if the girl doesn't come. This ought to be the spot, I think."

He was out on the verge of a bleak marsh, just discernible, and no more. Pollard willows waved and crackled, and low clumps of furze-bushes dotted it—black spectres, this bad March night.

"This is the spot, and this is the hour," Mr. George Wildair muttered to himself; "and a more desolate spot, and a more dismal hour, my adored Isabel couldn't have chosen, if she had tried for a lifetime. May the gods that specially watch over fools and lovers send her soon, or I will be found here, to-morrow morning, frozen as stiff as Lot's wife."

A step sounded on the road—baked hard as iron with black frost—a quick, light, woman's step. An instant later, and a slender female figure stood before him, dimly outlined against the gloomy night sky.

"Isabel."

He started forward, his arms outstretched.

"George!"

An hysterical cry of delight, and the outstretched arms were empty no longer.

"Dear George—dearest George, how good it is to see you again!" she cried, in the same hysterical way. "Oh! the last two months have seemed like eternity, never to see you, never to hear from you! And Miss Hardenbrook has been so cross, and so suspicious; and Ellen Rossiter has watched me as a cat watches a mouse. Oh!" clinging to him with something between a laugh and a sob, "one may buy even gold too dear, George."

"My dear little Issie! My precious little, ill-used darling! So you are enduring daily martyrdom for my sake. Time doesn't improve Miss Hardenbrook's temper, I suppose; but as it doesn't improve her health, either, there is reason to hope your martyrdom will soon end. How is she?"

"Very, very ill, and liable to die at any moment. Ellen Rossiter hardly leaves her night or day."

"Ellen Rossiter is the toad-eating, tuft-hunting old maid cousin you told me of, who hopes to supplant you in Miss Hardenbrook's will?"

"And who will supplant me, George," the girl said, solemnly, "as surely as aunt Hardenbrook finds out you are here, and that we have met."

"But she must not find it out," Mr. Wildair said, in rather a startled tone; "and she must not know we have met. It would be a terrible thing for us, Isabel, if you lost your aunt's fortune."

The girl looked up at him earnestly. But in the darkness the expression his face wore could not be seen.

"You would not love me less, George?"

"You foolish child! As if any loss in this lower world could make me do that."

"Then why would its loss be terrible? I should like to be rich, George; to live luxuriously, to dress superbly, to have all that is beautiful and bright in life around me; but I could give all up and go forth to beggary with you, my beloved, without one pang. Nothing in this wide earth could be terrible to me, but the loss of your love, George."

Mr. Wildair laughed and kissed her. But the laugh sounded cynical, and the kiss was not at all the rapturous proceeding it might have been.

"A very pretty speech, my dear, and a very flattering one. But there is a homely old adage, which is as true as truth itself to my mind,

"When poverty comes in at the door, love flies out of the window." The going forth to beggary sounds nice and sentimental in theory; but when it came to practice, I should quietly steal a razor and cut my throat. The story of King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid, as told by Mr. Tennyson, is a very charming story, indeed; and if I were a King Cophetua, and Miss Hardenbrook disinherited you, I should take my dark-eyed beggar maid, and make her my queen as promptly and romantically as he did. But, you see, being only a briefless barrister, just able to earn the bread and salt of daily life, and nothing more, beggar maids are not practicable. So, my pretty Issie, if we are to be blest for life before our hair turns gray, you must become heiress of Miss Hardenbrook's thousands."

"Then it is Miss Hardenbrook's fortune you marry, not Isabel Vance?"

She spoke in a cold, constrained voice, drawing herself free from his encircling arms.

"Nonsense, Issie!" he said, impatiently, "you know better than that. I'm not a very sentimental young man, and I tell you the plain truth. I love you dearly—I would marry you without a stiver to-morrow, if I could; but I can't; and if the Venus Celestis were to come alive on earth, and offer to become Mrs. Wildair out of hand, I should have to thank the radiant goddess, and respectfully decline, unless she brought several thousand dollars from Olympus with her. Don't be silly, Isabel, and don't be sentimental; Miss Hardenbrook will die shortly, and if she wasn't an unconscionable old spider she would have died long ago; and when your six months mourning has expired, we'll be married, and live happy forever after."

He took her in his arms again, and kissed the face that, even in the gloom, was dimly beautiful. But his words chilled her, and his careless caresses could not satisfy her troubled heart.

"But, George. Oh, stop! let us look the worst in the face. She may disinherit me—who knows? She is as capricious as the wind; she has made half a dozen different wills already; and the will that leaves all to me is not yet signed. It may never be, George—and then?"

"And then," said Mr. George Wildair, in a hard, resolute voice, "we will have crow's-feet under our eyes, and our heads will be beautifully silvered by the frosts of time before our honeymoon begins."

"No," cried the girl, as if with a sudden inspiration, "I know better than that! When I lose my fortune I lose you—you will go look

for another heiress; you will never grow gray waiting for me. And I——"

"And you?" the young man said, with a light laugh, "finish your prediction, my pretty Sybil."

He would hardly have laughed so easily had he seen how her face altered in the darkness. Her eyes blazed up, her hands clenched, her teeth shut convulsively together.

"Don't ask me! Don't ask me, George! I grow afraid of myself when I think of it. Better for you you had never been born than to tamper with what is here!"

She struck her breast heavily as she spoke, and something in her changed voice went with a thrill to his heart. But he next instant he laughed again, and kissed the quivering lips.

"My dear little tragedy-queen! You vow vengeance like the heroine of a high-pressure novel. We won't suppose such horrid things, we'll look on the bright side. Isabel Vance will be Dorothy Hardenbrook's heiress, and George Wildair's beautiful wife. Well, where are you going?"

"It is striking seven—hear it! Miss Hardenbrook may miss me, and send Ellen Rossiter in search. If she does, all is lost. Oh, George! George!" with a sudden passionate cry, a sudden passionate clasping him in her arms, "If I lose you I shall die! Let me go—my fortune is at stake. I cannot afford to lose my fortune now—God help me!"

Something in her voice, in her clinging clasp, touched his frivolous heart—and it was a frivolous heart to the core.

"My dear little girl! I were the basest villain on earth to prove false to you. When I do, I pray that I may die!"

"Amen!"

He shuddered as the ominous word passed her lips; he opened his arms and let her go.

"When shall I see you again?"

"Not until all is over," she replied, steadily. "I will not risk again the fortune you prize so highly, George, as I have risked it this night. You will go back to Boston to-morrow morning."

"But I may write to you, at least? And you will answer?"

"No; my aunt's spy, Ellen Rossiter, would find it out and betray us. I am afraid of that woman. I will neither see you, nor hear from you, until I go to you the mistress of Dorothy Hardenbrook's thousands. I will lay them at your feet, George, where my heart has been for many a day. If I win, all is yours; if I lose——"

Her voice died away. George Wildair, with

a chill of ominous dread, broke the pause that followed.

"You will not lose—you will be my queen as you are my darling. Good-by, my own love, until we meet again."

"Good-by," she said, solemnly. "Good-by, my love, my darling; and God bless you! Who knows whether I will be able to say that when we meet again?"

She fluttered away with the last strange words on her lips—fluttered away, and the black night swallowed her up. And Mr. George Wildair turned very slowly, and made the best of his way back to the hotel, with a very disagreeable prescience of impending evil troubling his usually serene mind.

"It's an uncommon bad-looking piece of business, George, my boy," the young lawyer soliloquized. "If the old girl turns up trump and does the right thing by Issie, all will go on well, and George Wildair will have a wife and a fortune to be proud of. But if she doesn't—oh! it's an ugly hitch, and I can't perform impossibilities and marry Miss Vance. And yet she is just the sort, is Isabel Vance, to go and kill herself, or somebody else—perhaps both. She's tremendously in love with me, poor little girl; and it's flattering, but not at all pleasant."

Before Mr. Wildair had come to the end of his soliloquy, and lit a consolatory segar, there emerged a figure from behind a clump of bushes, not two yards off the spot where the lovers had held their interview. It was a woman. She had heard and seen all, and her sharp, sallow face was flushed with triumph.

"At last!" she said to herself, under her breath, "at last, my lady, your hour has come! You dread Ellen Rossiter, do you? Ah! if you only knew how much reason you have to dread her, my proud and handsome young heiress! We will see what Miss Hardenbrook will say to all this; we will see whether that unsigned will will ever be signed; we will see what will happen when Mr. Wildair jilts his penniless lady-love."

She hurried away. And the sobbing wind, rising and falling, and the black spectral trees had the ghostly spot to themselves where the lovers kept tryst.

CHAPTER II.

"ALL FOR LOVE, AND THE WORLD WELL LOST."

THE night-lamp burned low in the sick-room, and the shadows crouched like evil things in the dusky corners. A large room, "curtained and close, and warm;" a wood fire burning

dimly on the hearth; medicine-bottles and glasses strewn the table; the old-fashioned four-post bedstead standing in the center of the floor, and old Dorothy Hardenbrook lying upon it, never to leave it but for her coffin.

The sick woman was all alone, and wide awake. The glittering eyes looked out of a withered, wasted, wrinkled face, like glowing coals; her skinny hands clutched a note, containing a few lines, written in a big, masculine hand. Over and over again, with a fierce and wrathful glance, the sick woman had read these lines:

"MY DARLING—If by any chance you can give your sick dragon, and her attendant, Cerberus, the slip, give it to them to-night. I will be at the place you appointed at a little past six. I am dying to see you, and see you I must, despite all the vindictive, dying old maids in Christendom. Devotedly, G. W."

The glare in the glittering old eyes, that devoured this cold-blooded note, was something horrible to see.

"If she does! if she does!" she panted aloud. "The heartless, ungrateful hussy! A miserable play-acting pauper, that I took from the streets and the stage, and fed, and clothed, and cherished! And this is my reward. She knows I hate this George Wildair, and all his race—faithless and false, and corrupt to the core of their black, bad hearts, one and all. She knows it: and if she meets him to-night—if she meets him——"

She stopped, trembling with suppressed rage from head to foot. The room and the house were very, very still. Outside, the wind sobbed and shuddered, and the bare, wintry trees rattled like dead bones; inside, the loud ticking of a clock, the monotonous fall of lurid cinders, the sleepy purring of a big Maltese cat, made a dull, drowsy chorus of their own.

The clock struck eight. As its last beat died away, the chamber-door opened, and Ellen Rossiter walked into the room.

Miss Hardenbrook raised herself on her elbow by a supreme effort, and looked with wild, eager eyes into the face of her spy. She was a little, wiry body, this Ellen Rossiter; a female terrier, with lips thin as knife-blades, and pale, steel-blue eyes—like the sick woman herself, a soured and sullen, and disappointed old maid.

"Well?" Miss Hardenbrook asked, with a fierce clutch at her bedclothes. "Don't stand staring at me there, Ellen Rossiter, like a fool, but speak out! Was the note true—was it from him? Was she there?"

She made the reply with cold deliberation, removing her things and folding them up.

"I was at the place before her; I knew it well, she often met him there before. I hid behind the bushes, and waited. He came first, singing and talking to himself, like the idiot that he is. She did not keep him waiting long; she came all in a hurry, and plumped into his arms, kissing him, and calling him her love and her darling, in a manner that was perfectly sickening and disgusting. I saw it all, and I heard every word they said."

"What did they say?"

Ellen Rossiter compressed her thin lips until her mouth was only a pale streak across her face.

"You had better not ask me—you won't like it."

"Tell me, I command you!" Miss Hardenbrook passionately cried. "Tell me, for I will know; tell me, for I have a right to know!"

"Very well."

She sat down by the bedside, her hands folded in her lap, her steel-blue eyes looking stolidly into the burning black eyes of the sick woman; and then, word for word, with diabolical precision, repeated the conversation of the lovers.

Dorothy Hardenbrook covered her face with both hands with a convulsive sob.

"And I loved this girl," she cried. "Oh! my God! better than I ever loved Thee!"

"Not more than she loves your money. She will wait six months after you are dead; and then Mr. Wildair will take possession of it and her, and scatter it to the four winds of heaven."

"Never!" The hands dropped, and the eyes blazed. "Never, Ellen Rossiter—never! never! Thank God, it is not too late yet! Give me that box."

She took a key from under her pillow. Ellen handed her a square, iron casket, which she knew contained two unsigned wills. Miss Hardenbrook opened the box, took out one of the wills, read it slowly through, and tore it into atoms.

"So perishes the hopes of George Wildair and Isabel Vance! So is ingratitude and falsehood punished! Send for Mr. Benson, and call Susan."

Mr. Benson was her lawyer, Susan was the cook. Ellen Rossiter disappeared, and returned in half an hour with both. The second will was spread out before Miss Hardenbrook; her face had grown hard and rigid as iron.

"I am going to sign my will, Mr. Benson," she said; "the other I have destroyed. I have sent for you two to witness the proceeding."

She took a pen, and signed the will with a firm, unflinching hand. The other two affixed their signatures. Then, with the same rigid composure, she locked up the document, and handed the key to the lawyer.

"You will keep this, my friend. The day I am buried, you will read this testament aloud, in this room, to those who attend my funeral. Now leave me—I am tired, and wish to sleep."

She turned away her face to the wall. The lawyer and Susan crept away on tiptoe. Ellen Rossiter lingered an instant, with an anxious look on her face.

"The doctor said she was liable to die at any moment; that any excitement would be fatal—and surely she has had excitement to-night."

Miss Rossiter did not retire; she descended to the parlor, and paced up and down. Ten, eleven, twelve struck. How awfully still the house was in its midnight hush; how awfully clamorous sounded the storm without! The wind had risen, and the rain fell—wind and rain wailed and sobbed, like cries of mutual agony.

"A fearful night!" the lone watcher said, with a shudder; "and she is afraid of night and tempest. I will go and see how she sleeps. Susan."

She shook and roused the sleepy cook—she was afraid to enter that room alone. Together they ascended, together they entered. The fire had died out, the lamp burned with a dull, red glow. The air of the room struck cold upon them. The raging of the midnight tempest sounded appallingly loud up there. On the bed the sick woman lay, as they had left her—she had never moved.

"Sleeping still," the cook said, in a whisper.

Ellen Rossiter crossed the room and bent over her a second, and she recoiled with a loud cry.

Yes, sleeping still; but the everlasting sleep. Miss Hardenbrook lay before them stark and dead.

It was a very long procession that wended its way from the prim, white, wooden mansion, following Dorothy Hardenbrook to her last home.

A miserable March day; the rain falling ceaselessly; the wind sobbing; the sky a leaden pall; the earth black and sodden. A bad, bitter day; and the funeral-train shivered in their wraps, and splashed forlornly through the mire of the wretched country road.

The dull afternoon was half over ere the grave was closed, and the gloomy procession back in the prim, wooden mansion. Ghastly looked the rooms, hung in the white trappings

of the grave; deathly was the chill and the silence that pervaded it, in the dismal light of the wet afternoon.

The staid parlor, never used save on state occasions, was almost filled with curious expectant listeners. With a flush very foreign to her usual sallow complexion, hot in her face, with a glittering light rarely seen in the dull steel-blue eyes, Ellen Rossiter folded her hands to listen to the reading of the will. The hour of her triumph had come—the hour for which she had watched, and waited, and played the spy. She, and not that tall, imperious young woman, who had queened it so long, would be heiress to Dorothy Hardenbrook's thousands.

Miss Vance, looking very handsome and stately in trailing crape and sables, sat by the window, gazing steadfastly out at the ceaseless rain. She was deathly white, and the hands, lying in her lap, were convulsively locked together. A sickening presentiment of what was to come filled heart and soul; the flashing fire in Ellen Rossiter's triumphant eyes; the pitying glances of Benson, the lawyer, had gone thrilling with an awful fear to her heart. She had staked all that life held of bliss, love, and hope, and happiness, on one throw of the dice, and she had lost. She knew it as surely as sitting there, staring blankly out at the wretched rain, as she knew it an hour after.

Mr. Benson slowly unlocked the box, drew forth the will, and began to read. Dead silence reigned. The document was brief and to the point. There was a legacy to Susan Turner, the cook, of one hundred dollars; two hundred to Mr. Benson to buy a mourning ring; and two hundred to Ellen Rossiter, in return for secret services faithfully rendered.

There was a shrill cry. Ellen Rossiter rose, wildly excited, from her seat.

"There is some awful mistake! There must be a mistake! Miss Hardenbrook never would insult me like that! Mr. Benson, you have read the wrong name!"

"I have done nothing of the sort, Miss Rossiter—be good enough not to interrupt. The remainder of her property, landed and personal, amounting in all to one hundred and eighty thousand dollars, Miss Hardenbrook has bequeathed, absolutely and without conditions, to"—a breathless pause—"to her third cousin, Miss Amy Hardenbrook Earle, of St. Jude's, Maryland."

There was a simultaneous exclamation from every one present, a gasping cry of rage and despair from Ellen Rossiter, and all eyes turned upon the stately figure by the window. But

Miss Vance sat like a stone, the face white and rigid, the dark eyes staring straight before her, with an awful, fixed, blind stare.

Mr. Benson folded up the will, relocked the box, and prepared to depart. The short, stormy March day was already darkening fast, and every one rose to follow his example, and spread the astounding news through Hollisville. Isabel Vance disinherited, not even named in the will; and an unknown young lady, in Maryland, left sole heiress of Miss Hardenbrook's wealth. Hollisville had not received so astounding a shock for ages before.

And the figure by the window was left alone. No one had approached her; no one had spoken to her; there was that in her face that held them off. One by one they dropped silently away, friends who were sorry for her, enemies who exulted over her. Ellen Rossiter had rushed up to her own room, and was crying her spiteful, disappointed heart out in a passion of bitter, raging tears. But Isabel Vance shed no tears, uttered no cry; her dumb despair was far too deep for that. With the loss of wealth she had lost all—love, life. For George Wildair's sake she had risked the glory of the world: for his sake she had lost, and he would be the very first to turn from her in her downfall.

The rainy twilight fell. The night wind, salt from the sea, rose and beat the rain clamorously against the glass. Isabel stood up, her face looking awfully corpse-like in the desolate gloaming, and with a steady step walked out of the room, and out of the house.

She went straight to the village—to the Hollisville House. Rain and wind tore at her, and buffeted her; but she heeded them no more than if she had been made of wood or stone. The proprietor of the hotel, standing in his own door-way, looking out at the stormy evening, recoiled with a blank stare at sight of her, as he might at seeing an apparition.

"Is Mr. Wildair in?"

That voice, hollow and strange, was not the melodious voice of Isabel Vance. The man's face softened into a gaze of unspeakable pity.

"Yes, Miss Vance; this way, if you please."

He ushered her up stairs, and into the private parlor, sacred to Mr. George Wildair's learned leisure. "Miss Vance, sir," he said, and disappeared.

Mr. George Wildair, seated before the window, his chair tipped back, his boots on the sill, a segar in his mouth, and his eyes fixed moodily on the darkening prospect, got up with a spring. He flung away his segar, and came

forward with a face that was anything but the radiant face of a lover.

"You here, Isabel! This is an astonisher! You surely have not walked all the way in this pouring rain?"

She glanced down at her drenched garments, as if conscious, for the first time, of the wet.

"I did not know—it does not matter! I wanted to see you before you left."

"Who told you I was going to leave? Sit down, pray, whilst I light the gas."

She waved her hand impatiently.

"We need no light for what we have to say. Thanks, I will not be seated. I only came to say good-by."

"You need not have come through this pouring rain to-night for that," Mr. Wildair remarked, rather sulkily. "You did not suppose I was going to quit Hollisville without calling to see you, Isabel?"

"I did. You would not have come, George."

"Thanks for your good opinion, Miss Vance. Think so by all means, if it suits you."

"You never would have come, George," she repented, steadily. "It was Miss Hardenbrook's heiress you courted—and I am not that."

"Confound the cantankerous old hag!" burst forth Mr. Wildair, furiously. "Why the deuce did she disinherit you, Isabel?"

"Do you need to ask? Because I met you that night?"

"Who told her?"

"Ellen Rossiter, I presume. Don't let us talk of that—it is too late now. I have lost all you cared for; there is nothing left for us but to shake hands and part forever."

"Not forever, I hope." But the voice in which he said it was a very hesitating one. "Don't think me altogether heartless, Isabel. I wanted Miss Hardenbrook's money, I don't deny; but I loved you as well. I would marry you to-morrow, if I could; but I can't. I am a poor devil, as you know, living from hand to mouth. I cannot afford the luxury of a penniless wife."

"I know it." The voice had fallen to a dull calm without one trace of emotion. "You can not afford to marry me now, and you never can. You have deceived me from first to last. There is nothing left but to say farewell, and go our different ways through life."

The unnatural calm deceived him. He had expected tears, reproaches, hysterics, a stormy and passionate scene. His face flushed, and he drew a long breath of relief.

"I have no wish to say farewell forever, Isabel," he said, gently; "but you have, and

you know best. It would be selfish in me, I dare say, to keep you bound by an engagement that cannot be fulfilled for half a lifetime. I love you, but I will not be selfish. I release you, Isabel, though heaven knows how bitter it is to say those words. I set you free, Isabel; and when I hear you are married to a better and a richer man, I will try and rejoice for your sake. It is destiny, I suppose, but it is very hard."

He turned hastily away to the window, and, for the instant, the self-deceiver believed he felt what he said. The young girl stood regarding him with a fixed, steady glance, reading all his falseness and baseness, yet loving him despite it all. The friendly darkness hid from him the gleaming light in her eyes, the unearthly expression of her face. He only heard that low, monotonous voice—and that deceived him.

"And you, George," she said, after a little pause, "you will woo and wed another heiress, I suppose? This Miss Amy Earle, for instance. She is young and pretty, no doubt; if not, what does it signify since she inherits Miss Hardenbrook's one hundred and eighty thousand dollars? There will be a Mrs. George Wildair, will there not, before the year ends?"

Mr. Wildair wheeled round from the window, wrapped in his dignity as in a mantle.

"You might have spared me the taunt, Miss Vance. I am not altogether the mercenary wretch you take me to be. But we will not re-criminate—we will part friends."

"Yes, we will part friends."

Her voice rose, her eyes flashed. But she held out her hand, and looked him steadfastly in the face.

"We will part friends. Farewell, George Wildair. You have deceived me more cruelly than man ever deceived woman before. You have blighted my life, you have broken my heart; but, as you say, let us part friends. Farewell, George—but not forever. *We shall meet once more!*"

She wrung his hand, dropped it suddenly, turned, and was gone like a flash—lost in the black, wet night; and Mr. Wildair was left staring nghast.

"Devilish odd!" he muttered at last, recovering from his stupor. "Has the loss of her fortune, and the loss of her lover, turned her brain? 'We shall meet once more,' shall we? I hope not. Did she mean that as a threat, I wonder? By Jove! I'll keep out of your way, Miss Vance, for the remainder of my mortal span, if I can."

Through darkness, through falling rain, through driving wind, Isabel Vance hurried home. "For the last time," she said, between her locked teeth, "My old life ends to-night, my new life dawns to-morrow. Isabel Vance is dead and buried; a fierce and pitiless avenger shall rise in her place. From this hour, let all who have wronged me, beware!"

She reached the house, soaked to the skin. She ascended to her own room, but not to change her saturated garments. Deliberately she set to work. She drew forth her trunks, collected her clothes and valuables, packed them rapidly, wrote her name and address on cards, and tacked them securely on. Then she sat down by the table, dropped her head on her folded arms, and lay there as though she never cared to lift it again.

All night long she never moved. The rain beat and the wind blew; but the storm in her burning brain and bitter heart, raged more fiercely still. Morning came, and with the first pale glimmer of the new day she lifted her

head, and showed a face so haggard and worn, eyes so wild and unearthly, that every trace of her bright beauty was gone.

Two hours later, Miss Rossiter, descending to breakfast, found Isabel dispatching her trunks to the station, and she, herself, in traveling array, waiting to follow. The haggard face and hollow eyes, made Ellen Rossiter recoil with a cry of dismay.

"Going!" she exclaimed, "so soon!"

"The sooner the better. Good-by, Miss Rossiter! If ever it is in my power to repay the many good turns you have done me, believe me, I shall repay them with interest."

She turned and walked out of the house.

Ellen Rossiter looked after her with a shudder.

"And if ever the arch-demon himself looked out of two human eyes," said Miss Rossiter, in a violent tremor, "he looked out of Isabel Vance's, just now. That girl has some awful deed in her mind, or I'm no judge of faces."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

THE MYSTERY AT BLACKWOOD GRANGE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SIR NOEL'S HEIR."

CONCLUDED FROM PAGE 203.

CHAPTER VIII.

ELLEN ROSSITER'S LETTER.

FACING the falling snow, and the bitter blast, with the sturdy defiance of strong, young manhood, Dr. John Sterling plunged his homeward way through the drifts, whistling cheerily a Christmas anthem. The red light from the curtained windows of his home flared out brightly athwart the fluttering flakes.

"No place like home," thought Dr. John, "particularly on a stormy winter night, and after a hard day's work. I hope none of my patients will be so unreasonable as to call me out again in this tempest. My good mother has about given me up for lost, I dare say."

He opened the door with his latch-key, and stamped the snow off his boots and overcoat. The parlor door opened, and his mother's pale and anxious face looked out.

"You, John? How late you are! You must be nearly frozen and nearly famished."

"Both, mother; and ready to do wonders among your Christmas dainties. But what's the matter? Have you seen a ghost, that you wear that scared face?"

"Something very like it, John," his mother said, gravely; "come in. Oh! you will do as you are! Sit down here and get warm. Did you meet any one, on your way, coming home?"

"Did I meet any one? And this Christmas-eve! There's a question! Did I meet whom, mother?"

"Amy Earle."

"Mrs. Dupree? My dear mother, what would fetch an invalid out on such a night?"

"Misery—madness, perhaps. She has been here."

"Mother!"

"It is quite true; she left not a quarter of an hour ago. She came like a ghost, and vanished like one."

"Alone?"

"Alone, and on foot. Was ever such madness heard of? The tyrant was away, for a wonder, dining at Major Mallory's, and the imprisoned slave broke her bars, and came here."

"Good heaven! on such a night! It is enough, with her constitution, to give her her death."

"I don't know that we need lament *that*, if it be so. Death is sometimes a merciful relief. I would rather see her at rest in her coffin, than that villain's miserable wife."

"Mother, you exaggerate, I think. What brought her here? What did she say?"

"Nothing that I can repeat—all was incoherent and wild. She wished she was dead—it was too late for mutual help, she was not his wife; she had sworn to keep his secret, and dare not break her oath. And then she broke out with a wild storm of hysterical sobbing, and said she would betray herself if she lingered longer, and rushed out of the house like a mad thing! I followed, but she was already out of sight. John, I think misery is turning her brain."

"God forbid!" said her son. He had turned very pale, and sat looking into the glowing coals. "Mother, I must go over to Blackwood Grange to-night."

"Impossible, John, in this storm."

"The storm will not hurt me, mother; and I would brave ten thousand such storms for poor Amy's sake. How do we know what may have befallen her on such a night? I will go at once."

"Not until after supper," said his mother, resolutely. "I will not hear of it, John. Here, draw up your chair; it is quite ready, and quite spoiled waiting."

Dr. Sterling obeyed. He had been hungry enough a moment before; but now he munched his toast, and drank his tea mechanically. Pale and moody he sat. What if that little, frail creature had never reached home? What if they should find her, white and cold, among the pitiless snow-drifts? He pushed away his cup and plate, and arose.

"Already," said Mrs. Sterling, reproachfully; "and you said you were hungry."

"I cannot eat, mother. Good heavens! she may be lying frozen to death by the wayside, whilst I loiter here. Poor child! Poor Amy! I wish Gaston Dupree had frozen to an icicle in the winter's storm the night I first brought him to Blackwood Grange."

He seized his overcoat savagely and put it on. Thrusting his hands into the pockets,

in search of his fur gloves, he brought forth a letter.

"Hallo! I quite forgot this! An epistle for you, mother, from the far North."

He threw the letter in her lap. Mrs. Sterling eyed the superscription in surprise.

"A woman's hand, and an unknown one to me. Post-marked Hollisville. Why, John, that is the New England village where Dorothy Hardenbrook died! Who can it be from?"

"You had better open it and see."

Mrs. Sterling opened the envelope, and drew forth a closely-written sheet. As she unfolded it, a card fell out upon the carpet. Her son stooped and picked it up.

"A *carte de visite*! It can't be a love-letter, with the gentleman's picture inclosed. Why—"

He stopped short, and stood staring. The picture was not a gentleman's. It was a vignette: the dark face of a young girl of more than common beauty. Two great, dark eyes lit up a handsome gipsy face—a bold, bright, dauntless face, that could not fail to impress.

But it was not the beauty of that pictured face that held Dr. John spell-bound. It was its unaccountable familiarity. It was as familiar to him, that gipsy face, as his own in the glass, and yet he could not place it.

"Where have I seen this woman?" he thought. "It is a face not easily forgotten. Those big, black eyes; that determined chin; that square, bold brow; that compressed mouth. My God! it is the face of Gaston Dupree!"

John Sterling absolutely recoiled from the picture and his own discovery. But in an instant he had recovered.

"It cannot be Gaston Dupree, of course. But if Gaston Dupree has a twin sister on earth, this is her portrait."

He turned the picture over. On the back was written, in a bold, decided hand,

"Truly yours, ISABEL VANCE,

Hollisville, May 4th, 18—."

"Isabel Vance! Isabel Vance!" repeated the young doctor. "I have heard that name before, too. Ah! I recollect! Isabel Vance was the young lady Miss Hardenbrook disinherited. What does Isabel Vance mean by sending her picture here; and what does she mean, also, by being the living image of Amy's villainous husband?"

He was interrupted by his mother. Mrs. Sterling rose up very pale, and placed the letter in his hands.

"Read that, John! It is a dying woman's warning, but I fear it comes too late."

John took the letter, and looked just at the

signature. It was not "Isabel Vance," but "Ellen Rossiter," and the letter ran thus:

"MRS. STERLING—MADAM—Although personally a stranger to you, I know that you are the guardian and nearest female friend of Miss Amy Earle, of Blackwood Grange, the young lady to whom Dorothy Hardenbrook left her fortune. It is on Miss Amy Earle's account I take the liberty of writing this letter.

"I am a woman lying on her death-bed. Before you receive this I shall be in my grave. Accept it as a voice from the grave—a voice raised to warn your ward. Pray God the warning come not too late!

"Dorothy Hardenbrook had adopted a young relative, a Miss Isabel Vance, with the resolution of making her her heiress some years before she died. She took this Isabel Vance off the stage, for she was a play-actor, and shut her up in the house at Hollisville. She was very severe with her, and the girl needed it, for she was bold, and bad, and headstrong, and unscrupulous. She was engaged to a young man she had known in the city, Mr. George Wildair, and he used to follow her secretly and meet her in the village. Miss Hardenbrook hated him, and forbade Isabel seeing him on pain of disinheritance. Isabel promised, and disobeyed—lying came natural to her. She met him again and again, by night and by stealth. Miss Hardenbrook discovered it, and the result was she disinherited Isabel, and left her fortune to Miss Amy Earle.

"Isabel's troubles came all at once, as troubles do come. Mr. Wildair jilted her immediately—it was her fortune he wanted, not herself. He jilted her, and she left the village and disappeared. If ever woman looked possessed of a demon, Isabel Vance did the last time I saw her. I knew then she would do something desperate, and I know now she has done it.

"The next I heard of George Wildair he was engaged to Miss Earle; the next I heard he had been foully murdered the night before his wedding. Madam, Isabel Vance did that deed. I am dying, and I say it—Isabel Vance shot her false lover as surely as I shall be judged.

"I have never set eyes on her since. I don't know what has become of her; but I *do* know that that is not likely to be her first and last crime. She will wreak her vengeance on Miss Earle, too, if you do not take care. She is subtle as a serpent, cunning as a fox, and unscrupulous enough, and daring enough for any deed under heaven. I send you her picture that you may recognize her, if you ever meet;

and there is a specimen of her handwriting on the reverse. Beware of her! I say it solemnly and warningly—a dying woman—beware of Isabel Vance!

ELLEN ROSSITER."

Abruptly and startlingly the letter closed. Dr. John looked up from it to behold his mother staring at the picture much as he had stared.

"Who is it?" she said, with a bewildered look. "Surely, I have seen that face before! John, who is it?"

"Try again, mother—think over the people you know in this vicinity. Imagine that splendid crop of hair, cut short; imagine a mustache on that dainty upper lip, and I think you will have it."

Mrs. Sterling dropped the picture as if it burnt her, and staggered back with a shrill cry,

"It is Gaston Dupree. Isabel Vance is Gaston Dupree!"

"Good gracious, mother!" exclaimed the doctor, startled by a supposition that had never struck him, "what a preposterous idea! For Gaston Dupree and Isabel Vance to be one and the same is the wildest of wild impossibilities."

"I don't care!" cried Mrs. Sterling, hysterically; "it may be impossible, but it is true! Oh! my poor, little dove! in the claws of that hawk! I understand all now; she said she was not his wife. That is the secret he made her swear to keep; he had to tell her, and made her swear never to betray him. Oh, John Sterling! he will murder that child!"

Dr. John stood gazing at his mother with an awfully blank face. It seemed such a mad supposition, such an utterly incredible idea—and yet—

"I don't know what to do, mother," he said. "I never thought of this."

"Go up to Blackwood Grange at once!" exclaimed his mother, frantically, "and tear the mask off that horrible wretch's face. Have Isabel Vance, *alias* Gaston Dupree, lodged in jail before morning, for the willful murder of George Wildair. Go!"

"No, no, no!" said Dr. John, "not so fast! There is no hurry—we will do nothing rash. I couldn't get Gaston Dupree arrested for murder on the baseless supposition of a dead woman. We will be slow—we will match strategy with strategy, cunning with cunning. Trust me, mother, I will save Amy yet."

"What do you mean to do?"

"Give me this picture. I will go at once to Blackwood and endeavor to see Amy. God grant she may have reached home in safety! Once

there, I will know what to do. Don't sit up for me, mother, I may return late."

"As if I could sleep. And John, for heaven's sake! take care of that wretch. If Gaston Dupree, or Isabel Vance, suspects you know the secret of her life, your life will not be worth an hour's purchase. You will be found as they found poor George Wildair."

"I am not afraid of Gaston Dupree," said Dr. John, coolly; "forewarned is forearmed. Good-by, mother; I beg you'll not sit up for me."

Dr. Sterling mounted his nag, and set off. An hour's disagreeable riding brought him to the Grange. A sable major-domo answered his thundering knock.

"Is your mistress at home, Pompey?"

"Yes, Marse John; jist arriv out 'n de storm. Walk right in, Marse John, Miss Amy's in de winter drawing-room."

He threw open the door of the cozy, crimson-draped room—unutterably cozy after the wild, white tempest without. Carpet, curtains, sofas, chairs, all were of rich glowing crimson, upon which the firelight and lamplight glowed with flashing brightness.

Seated on a low footstool, crouched over the fire, in a strange, distorted attitude of misery, was the little mistress of all this splendor. Her hood had fallen back, her pale yellow hair hung loose and disheveled, and the face turned to the fire was colorless as the winter snow.

She started up, at sight of her visitor, with a faint cry,

"Dr. Sterling! I thought it was Mr. Dupree."

She laid her hand on her heart, as if to still its tumultuous beating. Dr. John advanced, and took both her hands in his, and looked down, with infinite tenderness and compassion, in that poor, thin face.

"My pale, little Amy! You are whiter than the drifts outside, this stormy night. Thank heaven, I find you here safe! What madness, Amy, for you to face this bitter storm."

She covered her face with her hands, and tearless sobs shook her from head to foot.

"I was so miserable, so lonely, so desolate, so forsaken, so heart-broken! Oh, John! You don't know! You can't know! I am the most wretched creature in all this wide earth."

"Gaston Dupree is a villain, a cold-blooded tyrant and villain; but it is not too late to save you from him yet. Amy, I think I know the secret of his life—the secret he made you swear to keep."

She looked up at him in blank, speechless terror.

"It is impossible," she said, slowly. "No

creature on this earth knows it but himself and me; and I have not broken my oath."

"We will see," said Dr. John. "You would be glad to have your chains broken, would you not? To be freed from this horrible union?"

"Glad!" Her whole face lit up at the thought. "It would be new life—it would be heaven on earth. But it is impossible—I am his wife; I cannot desert him for what is his misfortune, not his fault. No human law would give me a divorce for an infirmity he cannot help."

Dr. John stared at her bewildered. What did she mean? "His wife!" "Infirmity he could not help!" Surely, they were at cross purposes; the secret he knew, or thought he knew, was not the secret she had sworn to keep. Was his wild supposition only a wild delusion, after all?

"Where is Mr. Dupree?" he asked, presently.

"At Major Mallory's; he has not yet returned. I expect him every moment; and John, don't be angry, please—but I had rather he did not find you here."

"I shall not remain long," replied the doctor, quietly; "but before I go, Amy, have you any letters or notes of Mr. Dupree's in the house? I have a particular reason for wishing to identify his writing."

Amy looked at him in surprise.

"Gaston's writing? Why, John?"

"I will tell you presently. Oblige me in this matter, if you can."

"I can, easily—wait a moment."

She opened a volume on a table near, and produced a copy of manuscript verses. It was Tennyson's "Break, Break," beautifully written; and Dr. John started at sight of the faultless chirography, as if it had been a death's-head. It was the handwriting of Isabel Vance.

"You will permit me to retain this, Amy? Thank God! Your freedom is near at hand."

He folded the paper and put it in his pocket. Amy gazed at him in wonder—he was pale even to the lips. He stood up to go, holding out his hand.

"Good-by, Amy, and good-night! Keep up a good heart, I think your troubles are almost over."

Amy's answer was a low cry of terror. Her eyes were fixed upon the door-way in a wild, dilated stare. Dr. John wheeled round and confronted Gaston Dupree.

CHAPTER IX.

ILL UNTO DEATH.

THERE was an instant's dead silence, during which the two gazed steadfastly at each other.

Dr. John's pale face and fearless gray eyes met the wolfish glare in the black orbs of Gaston Dupree unflinchingly.

"So," cried the latter, hissing his words, and turning suddenly upon Amy, "so, madam, this is how you amuse yourself in my absence, is it? You send word to your old lovers, and they face the howling tempests, and spend the long winter evening cozily by your side. A thousand pities, is it not, that I should happen in at this early hour, and spoil your *tete-a-tete*? My dear Dr. Sterling, pray don't hurry on my account; conduct yourself precisely as though I were still at Major Mallory's."

"I intend to," said Dr. John, coolly. "I was taking my departure when you appeared so unceremoniously—I shall take it now. Good-night, Amy; my mother will be relieved to know you are so well."

He bowed to trembling Amy, and stalked past Gaston Dupree, towering above him by a head. An instant later, and the house-door closed heavily behind him. Mr. and Mrs. Dupree were alone.

An artist, wishing to paint a living embodiment of terror, might well have taken Amy for his subject at that moment. She stood clinging to the back of a chair, her face utterly colorless; the blue eyes dilated until they looked almost black; the lips quivering; the slender form trembling from head to foot. Those wild, wide eyes were fixed upon the face of Gaston Dupree as if fascinated; the white lips strove to speak, but no sound came. He stood confronting her, dark as doom. Only for a second! Then, with one stride, he was beside her, grasping her slender arm in a cruel grip.

"Traitor!" he hissed, "perjured traitress! And this is how you keep your oath?"

"I have kept it, Gaston—truly, faithfully, so help me heaven! Oh! don't, don't! As truly as I live, I have not betrayed you."

"Then what brings that meddling interloper here to-night? How came he to know I was absent from home? You, madam, sent him word."

"No, no, no! I knew nothing of his coming—I never sent him word. He was the last person I expected to see, to-night."

"Or wished to see? Eh, Mrs. Dupree?" with a sneer. "He was a lover of yours, you know, in the days gone by."

"He never was," Amy cried, with spirit. "John Sterling was always like a brother to me, always my good, kind friend. Never more."

"Indeed! And pray what brought your good, kind friend all the way from St. Jude's this

"Toss me the truth, mistress, or it will be worse for you! He had some purpose in coming. What was that purpose?"

"Let go my arm, Gaston. You hurt me."

"I will hurt you still more, if you do not answer me at once, and truthfully. What brought John Sterling to Blackwood Grange to-night?"

"No earthly harm, Gaston—I am sure of it. He came to see me, and—a specimen of your handwriting."

"My handwriting!" He dropped her arm, and stood staring at her aghast. "My handwriting! What could Dr. Sterling want with that?"

"He did not say. Some question of identity, I think, he mentioned; but there could have been no particular purpose?"

"Couldn't there? Much you know about it! Did you gratify his whim?"

"Certainly, Gaston; I never dreamed you would object. There was a copy of verses in a book on the table. I gave him that."

"And he kept it, I'll be sworn?"

"He kept it, I think—yes. If I had thought you would object, Gaston, indeed, indeed I never would have shown it."

"You're a fool, Amy, and John Sterling is a meddlesome knave! But let him take care; I have risked too much to lose lightly now. If I find him prying into my private affairs, by heaven! I'll treat him as I treated——"

He stopped short. His face was livid, his eyes blazing. In that moment he looked like a madman.

"Don't stand there gaping like an idiot!" he cried, turning with sudden rage upon the affrighted Amy; "don't you see I'm wet to the skin! Ring the bell, and summon your servants; let them fetch me my clothes. Do you want me to get my death? But, of course, you do, you little, white-faced hypocrite; *that* is the dearest desire of your heart; and then you might marry the big, hulking doctor—'John Anderson, my jo, John'—your 'brother!' your 'good, kind friend!' But I'll baffle you yet. I'll baffle you both."

Surely Gaston Dupree was mad. His voice rose to a shrill cry—his eyes flamed like living coals. He strode toward her—then stopped. His white face turned dark-red. He put his hand composedly to his head, staggered blindly, and fell prostrate at her feet like a log.

Dr. Sterling and his mother were seated at their three o'clock dinner on Christmas-day, when a sleigh from Blackwood came over the frozen snow, and stopped at their door. A mo-

ment after and the little maid-servant ushered in the mistress of Blackwood Grange.

"Amy, what has happened?"

Both started up with the simultaneous question, for Amy was deadly pale, and the frightened expression that had grown habitual to her of late was wild alarm now.

"Oh, John! Oh, Mrs. Sterling! Gaston is ill—dying, I am afraid!"

And then tender-hearted little Amy sunk into a chair, and burst out into hysterical weeping, and told them incoherently how he had fallen in a fit last night; how they had got him to bed; how they had brought him to after infinite trouble; and how his first act had been to turn every one of them out of the room and double-lock his door; how they had listened in fear and trembling all night, outside his chamber, and heard him raving in wild delirium, and walking to and fro, talking insanely to himself. How he had raved, and walked, all this long day, until at last he had fallen upon the bed from sheer exhaustion, and lay there like a dead man. How, frightened almost to death, she, Amy, had fled hither for succor from Dr. John.

"And, oh, please come!" Amy cried, piteously, clasping her hands, "and force the door, and see what you can do for him. I know you are not a friend of his, John, and that he dislikes you; but, oh! he is dying; and you must try and forget the past, for my sake."

"My poor, little Amy," John Sterling said, with infinite love and compassion, "I would do far more than that for your sake. I will go at once, and my mother shall come, too. You will need her services as nurse. I think I understand why Gaston Dupree locked the chamber-door. Mother, put on your bonnet and come; I am certain you will be needed."

Half an hour later, and the trio were back at the lonely old house, its western windows all ablaze with the yellow wintry sunshine. Aunt Carry met them in the hall.

"He hain't opened his door yet, Miss Amy," she said. "He lies there like dead. Fore de Lord, I tink he's gone mad."

John called upon the colored major-domo, and, obtaining the necessary tools, forced the door.

"Stay here an instant, Amy," he said, "I will call you and my mother directly."

He entered, and closed the door. Gaston Dupree lay upon the bed, still wearing the clothes he had worn at Major Mallory's dinner-party. The dark face was flushed burning red, but the false mustache was gone, and the face was the very face of Isabel Vance.

Dr. Sterling opened the door a moment later, and called his mother in.

"It is as we suspected," he said, gravely. "Gaston Dupree is Isabel Vance. You will remove his masquerade, and replace it with suitable garments. The unfortunate woman is on the verge of a raging brain-fever, brought on partly by wetting and exposure, partly by mental excitement. It is ten to one if she ever rises from that bed."

"Better so," responded his mother, sternly. "And Amy? But Amy knows?"

"No," said Dr. John, "that is the strangest part of the story; I don't believe she does. Whatever the secret was she swore to keep, it was not the secret of this trickster's sex. You will break the horrible deception that has been practiced upon her as gently as you can. I will go now, and return with the necessary medicines in an hour or two."

He quitted the room. Amy stood waiting on the landing outside. He took both her hands in his, and looked down lovingly into her troubled face.

"My own Amy!" he said. "My pale little girl! All will soon be well with you now. There is a shock in store for you—bear it like the little heroine you are. *My* Amy! to think that paper walls should have held us apart so long. Go in; my mother has something to tell you."

She looked after him wonderingly; then she opened the chamber-door, and went in.

CHAPTER X.

SUNLIGHT AT LAST.

THE January day had been hopelessly bad and wintry. All the morning the low-lying clouds, and complaining wind whistling shrilly through the bare trees, had foretold the coming storm. At noon the storm burst. The wind rose to a wild, piercing gale, and the snow fell, fast and faster, and in wild, whirling drifts, until all around Blackwood Grange lay buried in its mid-winter winding-sheet.

The old house was very still—the stillness of death surely, for death stood grim on their threshold. The sable servants bated their breath, and hushed their voices, and muffled their tread, for the master they had never liked lay sick unto death in one of the upper rooms. They had never liked him; but the dread majesty of the grave was around him now, and they forgot their old aversion.

In that spacious chamber, hung with satin damask, carpeted in mossy green, adorned with

exquisite pictures and statuettes, the mystery of Blackwood Grange was a mystery no longer. Lying in the low, French bed, whiter than the snowy pillows, lay Isabel Vance. Gaston Dupree, the mockery of man, was no more. Isabel Vance, in the white robes of her sex, lay tossing there, raving in delirium, or sleeping the heavy, unnatural sleep produced by drugs.

Amy knew all. The unutterable wonder with which she had first heard, her wild incredulity, her absolute inability to convince herself of the truth, are not to be described. It proved the truth of Dr. Sterling's assertion—whatever the secret she had sworn to keep, *that* was not it. Slowly the truth forced itself upon her, day by day, until she could realize it at last. She clasped her hands in indescribable thanksgiving, her whole face alight with joy.

"Thank God!" she cried. "Oh, thank God! thank God! Better anything than be what I thought I was—a madman's wife!"

"What?" exclaimed Mrs. Sterling.

But Amy, with a frightened cry, covered her face with her hands.

"I have broken my oath—I swore not to— Oh! don't ask me any questions, Mrs. Sterling—I dare not tell you!"

Mrs. Sterling smiled. She could guess pretty nearly the truth now.

They did not tell Amy that other horrible suspicion, that Isabel Vance was the murderess of George Wildair. Such ghastly horrors were not for her innocent ears; they would spare her that, if they could.

Mrs. Sterling, Amy, aunt Carry, and the doctor, were all to be allowed to set foot inside that sick-room. The amaze of aunt Carry was something ludicrous in its intensity; but there was no help for it; they were forced to take her into their confidence. And by day and by night, for two long weeks, those three women watched by the bedside of that guilty woman, who had wronged one of them so deeply.

This wild January afternoon Mrs. Sterling sat by the bedside, watching her patient with a very grave face. The crisis of the fever had arrived; there was little chance of the sick woman's recovery, and they did not even hope it. Better for them, better for her, that death should release her, than that she should live to end her days in a mad-house, or a prison.

Amy sat by the window, gazing dreamily out at the fast-falling snow. An infinite calm had settled upon her, a deep content, a stronger, truer, more fervent love than any wild fantasy she had ever known, was slowly dawning in her heart. Her sorrows had been heavy, her

disappointments bitter; but new hope blooms so soon in the heart of young persons of nineteen or twenty.

As the short winter day faded into early dusk the snow ceased; but the ground was heaped high, and the bitter wind shrieked icily. Amy arose to draw the curtains and light the lamp.

"I am afraid the roads are impassable," she said. "The snow is higher than the fences; and John will persist in coming the most tempestuous nights. How is she?"

She stopped short, with a thrill of terror.

For two great, dark eyes looked up at her weirdly from the bed—two eyes in which the light of delirium shone no longer.

"Where am I?" said a low, faint voice. "What is it? What has happened?"

"You have been very ill," answered Mrs. Sterling, "ill of brain-fever. Don't ask questions; drink this, and go to sleep."

But Isabel Vance pushed away the cup with her weak hand, and fixed the great, dark eyes on the matron's face.

"What is it?" still in that faint whisper. "Something happened? What was it? Tell me—tell me!"

She looked at Amy—memory seemed struggling fiercely in her dulled brain; she looked at Mrs. Sterling; she looked around the familiar room, at her own dress—and all burst upon her like a flash. She sprang up in bed with a cry those who heard might never forget.

"Lost!" she shrieked, "lost! lost! lost!" And then there was a fierce convulsion, that seemed rending soul and body apart, and she fell back upon the pillows like one dead.

The midnight hour had struck. Through the bitter wind, and high-piled snow, Dr. John had bravely made his way, and reached the house as the mystic hour struck. Amy met him with a white, scared face.

"She is dying, John! Oh! if you could only have come sooner! Nothing can save her now."

"Nothing could have saved her at any time. My coming sooner would have been of little use. My mother is with her? Has she spoken?"

Still with that white, frightened face, Amy told of that dreadful awakening. She trembled with nervous terror from head to foot as she recalled it.

"My poor little girl!" Dr. Sterling said, "these death-bed horrors are too much for your tender heart. Go to your own room, my Amy, and lie down; you look worn-out. I don't want my precious little treasure—lost so long—to wear herself to a shadow. Go and try to sleep."

"But, John——"

"Miss Earle, I insist upon being obeyed. If my patient expresses a wish to see you, you shall be called. Meantime, go to bed, and go to sleep. I am not accustomed to be disobeyed; and don't you begin, mademoiselle. Go!"

He turned her toward her own room, led her to the door, and left her there with a parting threat if she dared disobey. Amy smiled to herself as she went in; it was very sweet to be taken possession of in this way by Dr. John.

In the sick-room, Isabel Vance lay fluttering between life and death. Nothing could save her now. She lay whiter than snow, still as marble, but entirely conscious, entirely calm; the great, black eyes looking blankly before her at the wall.

The dark eyes turned upon the young doctor as he entered, but the old light of hate was there no more.

"Shall we send for a clergyman, Miss Vance?" he said, bending over her, "your hours on earth are numbered."

She shook her head.

"No clergyman can help me—I am long past that."

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall become white as wool.' The infinite mercy of God is beyond our poor comprehension, Isabel."

She shook her head again.

"You don't know! You don't know! I have committed a greater crime than deceiving and making wretched the life of an innocent girl. John Sterling, I am a *murderess*!"

"I know it!"

She stared at him with wild, wide eyes.

"You shot your false lover, George Wildair, the night before he was to have married Amy Earle. You deceived her to possess yourself of the fortune Dorothy Hardenbrook should have left to you. You see I know all."

"And yet you talk of forgiveness."

"Because there is forgiveness for all who repent."

"But I don't repent! I would do it again, if it were to be done. George Wildair deserved his fate; and yet I was mad the night I shot him—mad with my wrongs. I don't think my brain has ever been right since. What I told Amy, the day I married her, was truth, after all."

"What did you tell her?"

"Do you not know? But I suppose she kept her oath. I told her I was a monomaniac—possessed of a desire to murder her. I told her the intensity of my love had begot that mad desire—that I dare not remain an instant with her alone, lest I should plunge the fatal knife

into her heart. She fainted, poor little girl! and that secret kept my other secret. A babe could impose on that insipid little nonentity."

"Poor Amy! You have been merciless to her, Isabel Vance!"

"Well, *you* can console her when I am gone. I am beyond your power and hers. You would like to have *me* hanged for murder, I dare say. Death will save you that trouble."

Amy slept long and soundly. The sun shining brilliantly on the snow, the entrance of aunt Carry with the breakfast-tray aroused her. She ate, refreshed by her deep sleep, and hurried to the sick-room.

It was very, very still. The blinds were still closed, the curtains still drawn. Mrs. Sterling moved softly about; Dr. John met her on the threshold.

"All is over," he said. "She died at dawn this morning, almost without a struggle."

He led her to the bed. Still, and rigid, and white, in the solemn majesty of death, lay Isabel Vance. More beautiful, perhaps, than she had ever been in life, the cold face looking like an exquisite face carved in marble.

"It was given out that Gaston Dupree was dead, and, on the third day, a stately procession left the gates of Blackwood. But in some way

the story leaked out, got whispered abroad, crept into the newspapers, warped and distorted, until John Sterling, for Amy's sake, felt compelled to come out with the truth. Far and wide people talked of the wonderful tale, and doubted, and were amazed. It was the most unheard-of occurrence that had ever transpired.

Amy Earle left Blackwood, and Mrs. Sterling with her. They took up their abode in New York until spring, living very retired, and preparing for a marriage and a long tour abroad.

Early in May, Dr. John Sterling left his patients in St. Jude's for a very prolonged holiday, and joined his mother in New York. And a week after, there was a quiet wedding; and Amy, for the third time, wore the starry veil and orange wreath of a virgin bride, and became a blessed wife at last.

They went abroad. Three years they spent in Europe; then with a baby, and a Swiss nurse, they returned home, and Blackwood Grange became the happiest home in the State.

Dr. John is a model, and a paragon of married perfection; and Amy Sterling is the happiest little wife, and blessedest little mother in wide America.